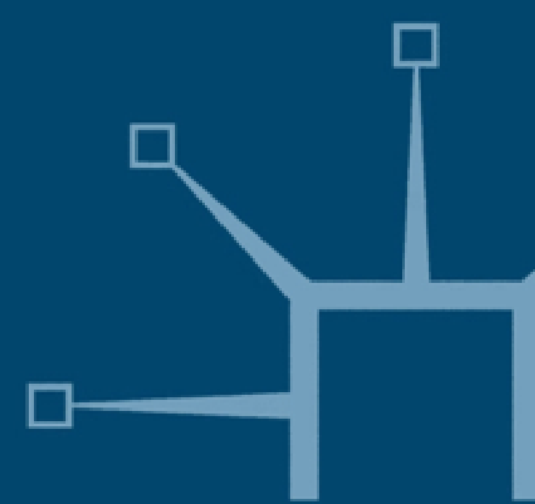
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Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92

Edgar O'Ballance



CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON, 1975–92

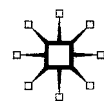
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Preface

Volumes have been written about the Middle East in the last few decades, mainly revolving around the Arab–Israeli dispute, but there are remarkably few books on one of its most unfortunate victims, the tiny multireligious Republic of Lebanon, which has been invaded by Palestinians, Syrians, Israelis and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah, all of whom used Lebanon as a battleground to fight each other. It has also been used as a base for international terrorism, which took the form of hijacking international airliners and holding international hostages. Throughout all this Lebanon managed to retain its political entity, despite having to bend considerably with the contrary winds of adversity. This is a fascinating basic account of its precarious struggle for survival, before fact becomes diluted by factional propaganda.

Although it has ancient historical connections, the Republic of Lebanon is a creation of the twentieth century, prior to which it was merely a *sanjak* (district) based on the Mount Lebanon area, a tiny Christian entity within the Ottoman province of Syria. The modern Lebanese military annals began with the 'First Lebanese Civil War' of 1858–61 against the Druse, in which thousands of Christians were killed, and which attracted Western European intervention.

Prised away from Syria after the First World War by the French mandatory power, which gave a dominant role to the Maronite Christian community, it was enlarged to become a viable country by the inclusion of the city of Beirut and its adjacent hinterland, in which there was a slight Christian majority. Gaining nominal independence in 1926, Lebanon slowly settled down as a multireligious republic. Under French guidance its economy improved and commerce thrived. Any stirrings of political discontent were stifled. Hundreds of thousands of Allied servicemen (myself included) visited Lebanon during the Second World War for a short leave from the desert and elsewhere, confirming its reputation as the Switzerland of the Middle East.

Lebanon became a prosperous East Mediterranean country of about 4300 square miles, with a multiethnic, multireligious population of about two million people who seemed to be amicably living and working together, a façade that later unfortunately proved to be false.

During the Second World War the French provided Lebanon with a constitution – known as the National Covenant of 1943, or more commonly referred to as the National Pact – in which political power was shared between Christian and Muslim sects on a ratio of six to 5, based on a census of 1932 that showed Christians to be in a slight majority. The president was to be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, the army commander a Maronite Christian and the National Assembly speaker a Shia Muslim. The president would nominate the prime minister, and all government, administration, civil service and army appointments were to be on a 'confessional' basis, an expression that became commonplace in Lebanon, meaning based on the assumed numerical strength of the various sects.

The French left Lebanon in 1946, having established a form of Western democracy as well as freedom of speech and independent political parties. To placate 'big brother' Syria, which had never resigned itself to the loss of its *sanjak*, France had allowed Lebanon to be an 'Arab country with a Christian majority' – after all, Arabic was the mother tongue of both Christians and Muslims – and it joined the Arab League as a founder member in 1945. At last truly independent, Lebanon was immediately faced by internal political and religious divisions, ambitious leaders being frustrated by the confessional restrictions.

The establishment of the State of Israel (in 1948), Lebanon's token participation in the war against it, the resultant establishment of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the pan-Arab euphoric boom orchestrated by President Nasser of Egypt, affected Lebanese Muslims and led to the Second Civil War in Lebanon in 1958, the constitution only being saved by US military intervention.

Israel defeated the Arab armies in June 1967 and made considerable territorial gains, after which Palestinian resistance groups turned to international terrorism. Ejected

from Jordan in 1969, the Palestinian militias moved into the southern, Shia-inhabited part of Lebanon, adjacent to Israel, where elements remain to this day. The tiny Lebanese army was unable to prevent this invasion and occupation.

Lebanon became a land of abrasive political militias. The Christians wanted to maintain their dominant *status quo*, but their increasingly doubtful majority was declining further simply because the Muslim birth rate was higher than that of Christians. Believing they were now in the majority, the Muslims pressed for amendments to the unwritten National Accord, their leaders having designs on the higher offices of state (to date reserved for Christians) and increased political power.

The Arab–Israeli War of 1973 showed the futility of Arab dreams of military victory over Israel, after which a period of tense stand-off ensued in the Middle East. In Lebanon the central government slowly weakened due to Christian feuds and rivalry, while discord between sects festered. The immigrant Palestinian militias, like cuckoos in a nest, became arrogant and demanding, which led to the Third Lebanese Civil War, the first round of which began in April 1975. At first the Christian militias fought against Palestinian ones, with Muslim militias joining in against their Christian compatriots, and some of the battles raged over the Palestinian refugee camps.

Once started, the Third Lebanese Civil War was difficult to stop. For the sake of survival the Christian militias forged tenuous periodic liaisons with Syria, which provided military assistance. This turned the Palestinian and local Muslim militias against Syria. The small Lebanese regular army suffered spasms of mutiny, desertion and divided loyalty. Christian groups quarrelled with each other, as did Muslim and left-wing ones. The Christian president and his government were unable to control the anarchy that spread across the country. The most unlikely alliances of convenience were formed and shattered as individual allegiances and agendas changed. At one time or other during this 16-year civil war, each one of the dozen or so major armed groups fought against each other, at least for a short while. Machiavelli would have been out of his depth in this web of intrigue and violence.

Furthermore Lebanon was invaded by Syrian troops in the guise of an Arab League peacekeeping force; and there they stayed as President Assad of Syria was scheming to obtain paramount influence over the country. Israel launched two major invasions into Lebanon and several smaller expeditionary ones, as well as frequently making air strikes on hostile camps and bases. Palestinian militias were besieged and bombarded by Israelis for 73 days in Beirut, while massacres of Palestinians in refugee camps were carried out by a Christian militia.

Later the Iranian-backed Hezbollah organisation established itself in the eastern Bekaa Valley. It went on to engage in international airliner hijacking, the seizure of Western hostages, attacks on Israeli territory and suicide bombing.

A long succession of ceasefires were broken with great rapidity. The last major battle was the General Aoun rebellion, in which mainly Christian elements fought each other. Syrian troops moved in to defeat Aoun, and to reinforce their military presence in part of Lebanon.

Eventually the Arab League produced the Taif Accords, which combined a ceasefire with an agreement that made Lebanon a Syrian protectorate in all but name. Lebanon remained occupied by Syrian troops, and Israel retained a security zone in southern Lebanon, occupied by its South Lebanese Army militia. Foreign-backed Palestinian militias and Hezbollah remained in the Bekaa Valley, retaining their arms.

It is thought that more than 150 000 Lebanese people were killed and over 200 000 injured in this 16-year war – no one knows the exact figures and official estimates are occasionally amended upwards.

It was a war involving atrocities that are usually more associated with medieval times, including arbitrary executions, assassinations, barbarity and the age-old custom of holding hostages for exchange, vengeance or insurance. Most armed militias had their own private prisons, and a number of those who were unfortunate enough to be taken hostage have still to be accounted for. Throughout these adversities the Lebanese presidency and governmental structure nominally survived (but with little real power) as many wanted to influence or use it for their own ends, rather than abolish it completely.

When covering events in the Arab–Israeli confrontation over the years I often found myself in Lebanon, and I personally witnessed the tragedies of the bitter civil war unfolding (regrettably, as far as most of the world was concerned, the problems of Lebanon and the Lebanese people were heavily overshadowed by, and considered peripheral to, other major Middle Eastern events). I conversed with several Lebanese statesmen, political activists and representatives of the main militias involved – both Christian and Muslim. While all seemed to have a logical or pragmatic mixture of reasons for fighting, including fear, self-defence, revenge and ambition, one was constantly saddened by the hatred and violence they exhibited towards each other whenever the opportunity arose.

In a recent brief visit to Lebanon I saw old enemies amicably drinking coffee together and chatting to each other as though little had happened. The Lebanese seem to want to wipe the memory of the Third Civil War and its evils from their minds. The National Assembly, now with an equal number of seats for Christians and Muslims, has approved an 'Amnesty for War Crimes' law, which must be a smoothing factor for future good internal relations, if all Lebanese are to live, work and trade together. Moralists may disapprove of this sentiment, but unlike the Second World War, in Lebanon there was no clear victor, only survivors, all of whom lost something but retained the will to survive, and to work for recovery and future prosperity, or so one sincerely hopes. It seems that for once peace has triumphed over war.

EDGAR O'BALLANCE



Acknowledgements

The information contained in this book was mainly gathered during a number of visits to Lebanon over the years. I attended numerous press conferences and conducted personal interviews with a number of Lebanese leaders and many middleman contacts, official and unofficial, as well as accumulating sheaves of handouts from many sources. Where material was obtained from other sources, due credit is given in the text.

All comments, deductions and opinions are my own, and at times may differ from the current, generally perceived wisdom.

Map sources include the United Nations, NATO, Lebanese government publications, Lebanese police records, *The Times Atlas of the World*, *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times*.

Copy from the following television and radio broadcasters, periodicals and news agencies was consulted, sometimes in translation.

UK	TV and radio: BBC, Channel Four, ITN, ITV. Newspapers and periodicals: *Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Times*, *Guardian*, *Middle East*, *Middle East International*, *Middle East Economic Digest*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Times*. News agency: Reuters.
USA	TV: CBS, CNN. Newspapers and periodicals: *International Herald Tribune*, *Middle East Watch*, *News Week*, *New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*.
Lebanon	TV and radio: al-Manar TV, Radio Beirut, Radio Lebanon, Voice of Lebanon. Newspapers: *al-Nahar*, *al-Hawadress*.
Israel	Newspapers: *Jerusalem Post*, *Maariv*.
France	Newspapers: *Le Monde*. *Liberation*. News agency: Agence France-Presse.
Syria	Radio: Radio Damascus. Newspapers: *An Anwar*, *An Nahar*.



List of Abbreviations

ADF	Arab Deterrent Force
ADP	Arab Democratic Party
ALF	Arab Liberation Front
ASALA	Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia
ASO	Armed Struggle Organisation
AUB	American University, Beirut
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
FLLF	Front for the Liberation of Lebanon from Foreigners
FSI	Internal Security Forces (Lebanese)
IDF	Israeli Defence Forces
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IUM	Islamic Unification Movement
LAA	Lebanese Arab Army
LCP	Lebanese Communist Party
MNF	Multinational force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDF	National Democratic Front
NDM	National Democratic Movement
NLP	National Liberal Party
NSF	National Struggle Front
OCAL	Organisation of Communist Action in Lebanon
ORN	Organisation of the Revolutionaries of the North
PASC	Palestine Armed Struggle Command
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	PFLP-General Command
PLF	Palestine Liberation Front
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PNSF	Palestine National Salvation Front
PSF	Palestine Struggle Front
PSP	Progressive Socialist Party
SAM	Surface-to-air missile
SLA	South Lebanon Army
SNSP	Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party

UAR	United Arab Republic
ULF	Unification and Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNIFIL	UN Interim Force in Lebanon
UNOGIL	UN Observation Group in Lebanon
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East
UNTSO	UN Truce Supervision Organisation
ZLA	Zghorta Liberation Army

Chronology

1858–61	First Lebanese Civil War
1920	Mandate awarded to France: modern Lebanon created
1925–7	Druse Revolt
1926	Independence nominally granted by France
1926	Constitution promulgated
1940	Vichy French in control
1941	Allied 'Operation Exporter' defeats Vichy French
1943	The National Covenant (Pact)
1946	The French depart
1948–9	War with Israel
1958	Second Lebanese Civil War
1961	National Socialist Party revolt
1968	Israelis strike at Beirut International Airport in December
1969	Lebanese army clashes with Syrian Saiqa. Palestinian guerrillas establish bases in the Arkoub region. The Nine-Day War. The Cairo Agreement
1971	General strike. Lebanese army clashes with Palestinians

1975

February	Fishermen's dispute
May	Ceasefire
June	Government of national unity
August	Third Lebanese Civil War begins
September	National Dialogue Committee formed
October	Damascus Agreement. Security Committee formed. Battle of the Hotels
November	Higher Military Committee formed
December	Black Sunday

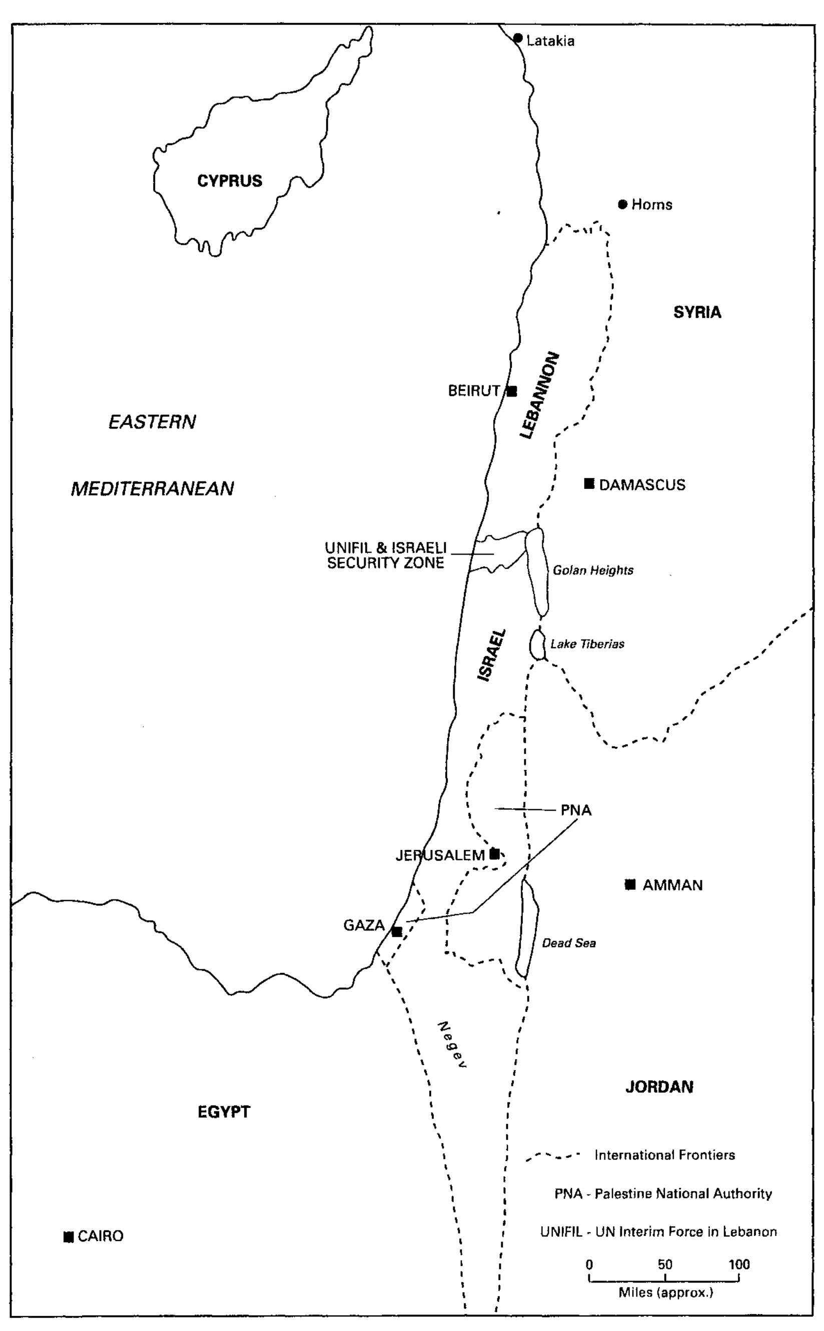
1976

January–July	Blockade of Tel Zaatar refugee camp. Damour overrun by Muslim militias
March	Muslim military rebellion. Attack on presidential palace. UN and Western intervention
April	Syrian troops arrive in Lebanon. Israeli 'Red Line' defined

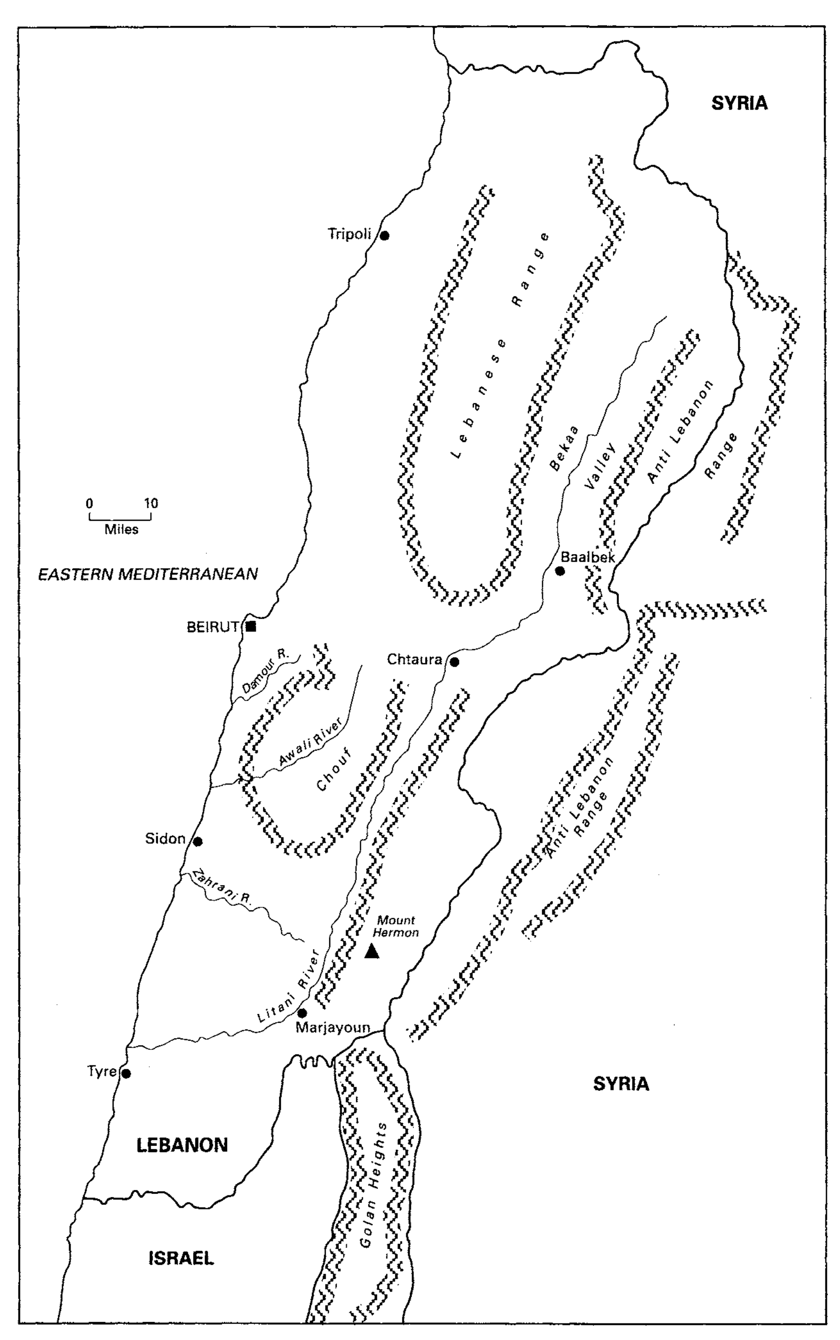
June	Battle of the Camps
July	Damascus Conference
October	Riyadh Agreement and ceasefire
1977	
January	Press censorship in Lebanon
February	Christian offensive in the south
March	Assassination of Kamal Jumblatt
July	Chtaura talks begin
September	US-brokered ceasefire
1978	
February	Lebanese army clashes with the ADF
March	Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. UNIFIL established
April	ADF clashes with Christian militias. Six-point national accord
May	Christian militia factional fighting
July	ADF intervention in Christian factional fighting. Haddad's forces clash with UNIFIL
1979	
April	Haddad proclaims a Lebanese Free State
May	Israeli raids into Lebanon. Resumed Christian militia infighting
August	Falangists attack Armenians
1980	
January	ADF redeployment. Falangists attack the NLP militia
February	Haddad clashes with UNIFIL
October	Falangists attack the NLP in Beirut
December	Falangists attack Zahle
1981	
April–June	Siege of Zahle
December	Explosion in Iraqi Embassy, Beirut; 60 killed, including the ambassador
1982	
June	Israeli invasion of Lebanon
June–August	The siege of Beirut
September	Bashir Gemayel assassinated. Shatila and Sabra refugee camp massacres. MNF formed
November	Lebanese government obtains emergency powers

1983	
April	Explosion at US Embassy by suicide bomber
May	Withdrawal agreement
July	Druse ambush Lebanese army. National Salvation Front formed
September	Israeli Operation Millstone
October	Suicide bombings in Beirut
November	Druse declare an autonomous administration
December	South Lebanese Army formed
1984	
January	Lebanese disengagement plan
February	Saudi peace plan. MNF withdraws from Lebanon
April	Karami government
August	Fighting in Tripoli (Tawheed versus IUM). Car bombings in Beirut
October	The National Democratic Front formed
1985	
January	First stage of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon
March	Second and third stages of Israeli withdrawal. CIA intervention in Lebanon. Lebanese Forces split
May	Amal attacks Beirut Palestinian camps
June	Palestinian camps ceasefire agreement. Major aircraft hijacking incidents. Amal and the PSP fight along the Green Line
July	Security Coordination Committee formed
August	National Unity Front formed
December	Syrian-brokered peace agreement for Beirut
1986	
January	Fighting in Tripoli
June	Another Syrian-brokered ceasefire agreement
October	Beirut Palestinian camps besieged by Amal
December	Tawheed militia defeated in Tripoli
1987	
January	Siege of the Palestinian camps
February	Siege of the camps lifted. Syrian troops take over security in West Beirut
May	Lebanese government abrogates the Cairo Declaration
June	Prime Minister Karami assassinated

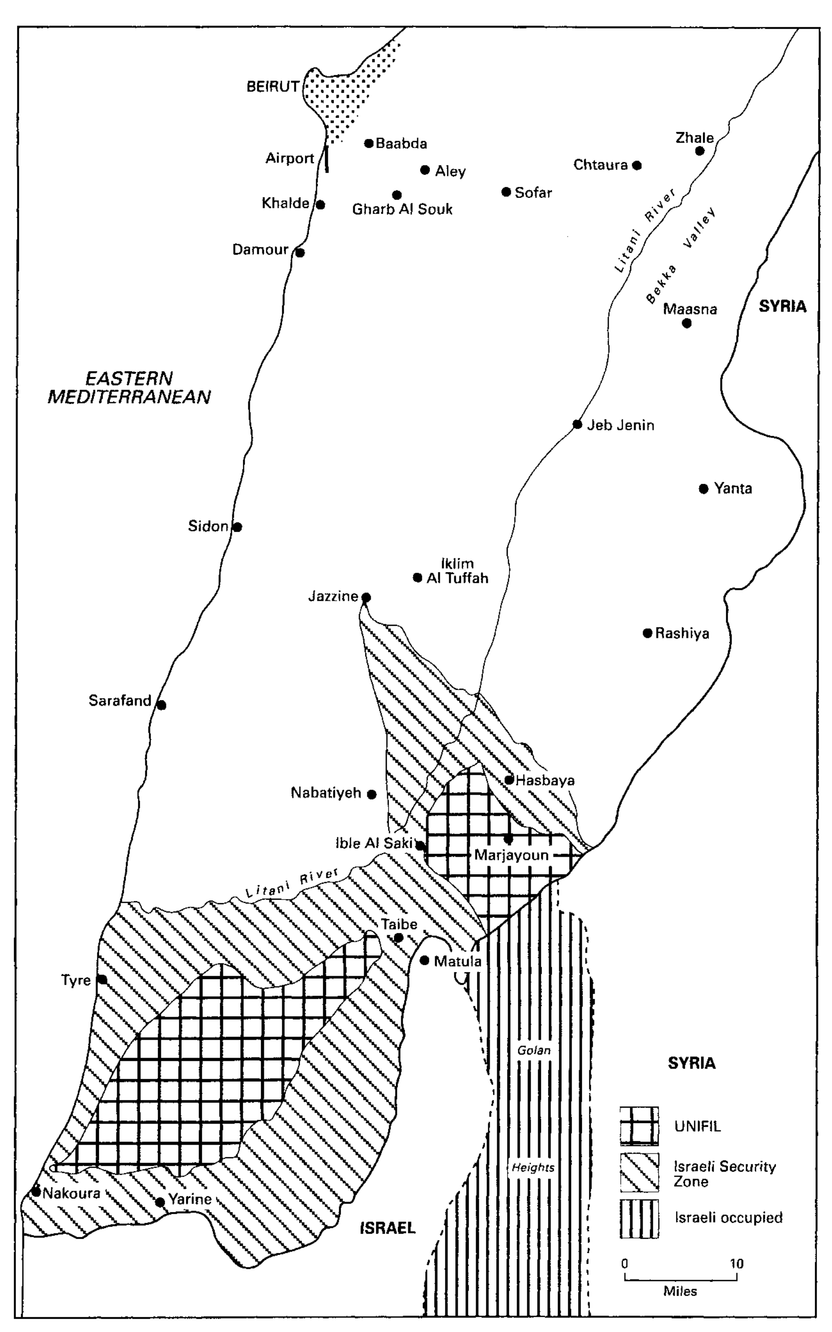
July	Unification and Liberation Front formed
September	Amal clashes with Syrians in Beirut. Amal and PLO clashes
October	Amal and Druse clashes
1988	
January	Blockade of Palestinian camps eased
February	Amal clashes with Hezbollah
September	Two rival governments in Beirut
1989	
January	Fighting between Amal and Hezbollah. Amal–Hezbollah agreement
February	Lebanese army clashes with Lebanese Forces militia
March	Christian–Muslim confrontation in Beirut. Aoun's 'war of liberation'
April	Arab League's peace plan
August	Fighting on the Souk al-Gharb ridge: United Front formed
September	The Taif plan
October	The Taif accords. Lebanese National Accord Government
November	Rene Mouawad elected as president. Hoss cabinet formed. President Mouawad assassinated. Elias Hwari elected as president. General Michel Aoun dismissed as army commander
December	Amal–PLO agreement
1990	
January	General Aoun attacks the Lebanese Forces militia
February	Aoun–Geaga pact
July	Reunification of administrative Beirut
September	Death River massacre
October	Aoun's last battle. Greater Beirut security plan. Assassination of Dany Chamoun
December	Umar Karami government
1991	
January	Lebanese army moves into the south
May	National Assembly expanded. Treaty of brotherhood with Syria
August	General amnesty
September	Lebanese–Syrian Security Pact



Lebanon (Strategic)



Lebanon (Physical)



Southern Lebanon

1 Prelude to Civil War

The incident that marked the prelude to the Third Civil War in Lebanon, although some authorities earmark other starting points, occurred in Beirut on 13 April 1975 in the mainly Christian district of Rumaniyeh, outside the Church of St Maron. Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Falange (Phalange) Party, sometimes referred to as the Kataib, was attending a consecration service. Outside, members of his armed and uniformed militia were diverting traffic away from the front of the church when a vehicle carrying half a dozen Palestinian militiamen – firing their rifles into the air in the customary '*baroud*' – came on to the scene. The Palestinians refused to be diverted from their route, so the Falangists halted their progress and attacked them. In the scuffle the Palestinian driver was killed, as were three Falangists.

An hour or so later a bus was ambushed outside the same church. There are two conflicting versions of what happened. The Falangists insisted that the bus had been carrying armed Palestinian reinforcements, hurrying along to avenge the death of their driver, and as the Falangists had been anticipating such a reaction they had been waiting in ambush. A shoot-out had ensued in which 14 Palestinians were killed.

On the other hand a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) spokesman insisted that the bus had contained only families, returning to the nearby Tel Zaatar Palestinian refugee camp. It had been fired on from the vicinity of the St Maron church, killing 27 men, women and children and wounding others (the dead were never positively identified by name, age or sex).

These two incidents roused smouldering factional hatred and sparked off street clashes between Falangists and Palestinians. Some of these clashes involved a degree of violence not seen since the Nine-Day War of 1969. Small groups of trigger-happy gunmen constructed sand-bagged emplacements and began to fire automatic weapons from windows and rooftops. That night gangs of Falangists and Palestinian gunmen roamed the streets looking for trouble.

The following day shops and banks were closed, some barricades appeared and spasmodic factional fighting occurred, the trouble spreading to the seaports of Tripoli, Tyre and Sidon. In Christian districts in East Beirut the armed Falange militia, which had quickly mobilised, manned roadblocks, stopped vehicles and checked identities, while in mainly Muslim West Beirut, Palestinians did likewise. Armed Palestinian guards appeared at the entrances of Palestinian refugee camps in and around Beirut. In the evening of 14 April a detachment of the Force de Securitie de la Interior (FSI, the Lebanese security forces), consisting of the gendarmerie and the police, entered Rumaniyeh and arrested a number of people.

The recently appointed Muslim prime minister, Rashid Solh, demanded that Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Falange, hand over the men responsible for the Palestinian driver's death. He refused, commenting that 'There is not one government, but many in Lebanon. The authority of the state does not cover the whole state' (Radio Lebanon). Solh threatened to send gendarmes to occupy the Falange Party HQ by force. On the 15th, as the street fighting intensified, Pierre Gemayel met President Sulieman Franjieh, who was in hospital recovering from an operation, and agreed to hand over the two men alleged to be responsible for killing the Palestinian driver.

By the following day the fighting was attracting more combatants. Extremist Lebanese Muslim groups joined in on the side of the Palestinians, and elements of several smaller Christian militias on the side of the Falangists. There was no shortage of volunteers, as everyone seemed to be itching to have a go at a traditional enemy. Nor was there a shortage of weapons. Tension had begun to rise during the first days of the month, when armed men, suspected of being Palestinian militiamen, had tried unsuccessfully to kidnap Amin Gemayel, son of the Falangist leader, but this had been hushed up to avoid any increase of the intercommunal friction.

THE ARAB LEAGUE ARRANGES A TRUCE

Mahmoud Riad, secretary general of the Arab League, arrived in Beirut and at the request of President Sadat of Egypt attempted to broker a ceasefire, urging all involved to exercise restraint. On the evening of 16 April Prime Minister Solh announced that all sides had agreed to a truce, which was to come into effect immediately. Pierre Gemayel handed over the two suspects to the police, but as by this time it was alleged that seven men in all had been involved in the death of the driver, the Palestinians insisted that the other five should also be arrested and handed over. Gemayel refused to do this.

Solh ordered the withdrawal of the armed security forces from the streets and squares of the city, and most of the combatants were persuaded by their leaders to withdraw also. On the 17th people gradually reappeared on the streets, shops and banks began to reopen and detachments of gendarmes were deployed to sensitive communal boundaries to block off hostile factions from one another. Yassir Arafat, chairman of the PLO, an umbrella organisation consisting of a dozen or so groups, each with its own agenda and armed militia, had no control over the extreme 'rejectionist' ones: those favouring armed struggle against Israel and rejecting any move towards peace, thus opposing Arafat, who at that time was seeking a negotiated peace settlement. The Falangists – who wanted to rid their country of the some 300 000 Palestinians (no one knew exactly what the true figure was) who had descended on their country and were becoming arrogant and aggressive – were champing at the bit. Although the situation was extremely tense, the ceasefire held.

Prime Minister Solh blamed Israel for the recent fighting, alleging that over 200 Israeli agents with false passports had entered Beirut during the previous fortnight. His allegation might have contained an element of truth as this intercommunal strife was to Israel's benefit, providing a probable pretext for intervention. Solh stated that the death toll for the four-day spasm of violence was 105, but according to the local media 150 was a more accurate figure.

CHRISTIAN PREPLANNING

It was an open secret that Pierre Gemayel had long been planning an all-out offensive against armed Palestinian commandos to drive them from the streets of Beirut, and indeed from Lebanon if possible. (After clashes between the Lebanese army and Palestinian groups in April–May 1973, the Falange Party and the NLP had built up unofficial armed militias to counter the armed Palestinians in Lebanon. There had been further clashes between the Lebanese army and Palestinians in 1974.) Palestinians, especially those in the smaller rejectionist groups outside the PLO, had come to dominate certain Muslim areas of the capital and were aggressively jostling Christians and others aside.

Gemayel had put this plan to Camille Chamoun, leader of the National Liberal Party (NLP), which had a large armed militia, and also to Raymond Edde, who led the National Bloc, a right-wing Christian coalition, also with an armed militia; but both had refused to join him in this long-term ethnic cleansing plan. Suspicion and rivalry between the main Christian leaders, sects and factions were inherent and deep-rooted. Elements of Chamoun's militia had joined in the four days of fighting without formal permission from their leader, motivated by the opportunity to strike at Palestinians.

THE FISHERMEN'S DISPUTE

While the Rumaniyeh incident was the spark that ignited the events leading up to the civil war, the 'Fishermen's Dispute' provided the powder that caused the explosion. In February 1975 there had been protests in the port of Sidon by fishermen, mainly Muslim Shias, about the granting of exclusive fishing rights to a company named 'Proteine' (the chairman of Proteine was Camille Chamoun, the NLP leader) on the ground that this would deprive them of their living by 'industrialising fishing'.

Led by Marouf Saada, a Shia politician who had formerly represented Sidon in the National Assembly, the protesting fishermen began a series of demonstrations that

got out of hand. Prime Minister Solh, a Sunni Muslim, called out the army. Clashes between fishermen and soldiers began on 26 February and lasted five days. Six soldiers and at least 18 civilians were killed, and many were injured. About 100 Palestinian militiamen from the nearby Ain Helweh refugee camp joined in on the side of the rioting fishermen. Solh withdrew the troops from Sidon on 2 March, and the disturbances subsided.

On 5 March Malek Salim, minister of power and a Sunni Muslim, resigned from the Solh government after unsuccessfully calling for the dismissal of General Iskander Ghanem, the army commander, whom Salim blamed for the Sidon deaths. Chamoun called for a referendum to decide whether Palestinian armed groups should continue to be allowed to operate from southern Lebanon into Israel, which the Palestinians claimed they had the right to do under the secret clauses of the Cairo Agreement of 1969.

On the 6th Marouf Saada died of the gunshot wounds he had received at the hands of soldiers on 26 February when leading a demonstration. This caused further outbreaks of trouble in Sidon, while in Beirut there were rotating rival demonstrations on successive days: by Muslims condemning the action of the Lebanese army, and by Falangists supporting it. On the 9th Solh announced that his government would enter into discussions with the Sidon fishermen to ensure they 'received their just demands', to bring them into a welfare scheme and to help them establish a cooperative venture (Radio Lebanon). As a result the second round of these particular disturbances calmed down.

GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS

On 10 March 1975 certain senior Muslim leaders, including Prime Minister Solh, reiterated their demand for a curb on the powers of the Christian president, the establishment of a 'national balance' within the army, and the creation an 'interconfessional command council' to share military power with the Christian army commander. Solh and other former Sunni prime ministers were ambitious aspirants to

the office of president, from which they were debarred by the National Accord of 1943 because of their religion.

A proposal to change the structure of the army was already under consideration and was being pushed hard by Kamal Jumblatt, the Druse leader (the Druse falling loosely into the Muslim category for this purpose), who alleged that at least 75 per cent of army officers and soldiers were Christian. As there had not been a national census since 1932, confessional estimates were only assumptions. The Christians were reluctant to admit the possibility that they no longer represented the national majority, a point the Muslims were trying to make. Gemayel and Chamoun strongly opposed this reforming measure, threatening to withdraw their party's representatives from the cabinet if it was proceeded with.

The Solh government teetered precariously. Six ministers, mainly Christian, resigned on 7 May. On the 12th another five followed suit in protest against Solh's indecisive handling of the fishermen's dispute, the Rumaniyeh incident and the subsequent fighting and demonstrations in Beirut and Sidon. On the 15th Solh submitted his resignation to President Franjieh, which was accepted but Solh was asked to stay on as caretaker prime minister.

In his resignation speech Solh said bitterly that 'The Falangist Party must shoulder full responsibility for the massacres (at Sidon and Rumaniyeh), and the repercussions that followed, as well as for the victims, and the material and morale damage caused to the country' (*The Economist*). He also proposed that 'long-term Muslim residents', meaning those Palestinians who had been living in UNRWA-supported refugee camps since the events of 1949 and 1967, should be given Lebanese citizenship. This was a sensitive issue, which if effected would drastically reduce the existing nominal population ratio of 6:5 in favour of the Christians. The Christians raised howls of protest in defence of their doubtful majority, but the Muslims generally liked the idea for the opposite reason.

FIGHTING AROUND TEL ZAATAR

Fighting between Christians and Muslims broke out again on 20 May 1975 and continued for more than three days. The fighting mainly centred around the Tel Zaatar Palestinian refugee camp, which was isolated within the Christian-dominated Dilwaneh district of Beirut. The Palestinians alleged that Christians were firing rockets into the camp because they wanted Tel Zaatar and the other Palestinian refugee camps situated within Christian areas in and around Beirut to be removed. The gendarmerie positioned armoured vehicles at street intersections to keep the protagonists apart, but three successive ceasefires were almost immediately broken, casualties mounted steadily, and on the 22nd there was a strike in Beirut.

A MILITARY GOVERNMENT

President Franjieh installed a mainly military government on 23 May 1975, the first in modern Lebanese history. Of the eight ministers, six were senior serving military officers, including General Ghanem, the army commander, and General Said Nasrallah, the army chief of staff. The prime minister was Nureddin Rifai, aged 76 years, a former director of the FSI who had retired in 1962. The confessional composition of the military cabinet was four Christians, three Muslims and a Druse. The new government pleased the Falangists as they hoped a strong military government would bring the Palestinian militiamen to heel, but none of the Muslims, whether Sunni, Shia or Druse, wanted this to happen as they sympathised with the Palestinian cause.

Opposition to the military government reunited two old Sunni rivals, Saeb Salam and Rashid Karami, both former prime ministers. The issue was no longer one of political differences between left and right, but had polarised into an almost complete religious divide: Christians of all denominations against Muslims of all denominations.

An outburst of intercommunal fighting in parts of Beirut, in which probably over 60 people were killed and more than 200 injured, ended in a ceasefire on the 25th. A worried

Yassir Arafat, leader of the PLO, ordered those Palestinians under his direct control to avoid clashing with Lebanese government forces. Brigadier Musa Kenaan, the deputy prime minister, assured Arafat that the military government would honor all agreements his country had made with the PLO. Kenaan was referring to the secret Cairo Agreement of 1969, under which it was assumed that the PLO fighters could remain in Lebanon and operate from there against Israel. Arafat did not believe him, but then neither did Kenaan really believe what he was saying: but both were pragmatists, and both smiled at each other the meantime. Later President Franjieh likewise confirmed to Arafat that his government would adhere to the Cairo Agreement, knowing that he could do no other.

The anti-Palestinian stance of the Lebanese military government caused a twinge of anxiety in some Arab countries, especially in adjacent Syria, which on the 25th sent its foreign minister, Abdul Halim Khaddam, to 'reason' with President Franjieh. Khaddam's persuasion was effective, and the following day, after only three days in office, the military government resigned. Muslims in Lebanon and other Arab countries were delighted at Nureddin Rifai's sudden downfall, which ostensibly was because he had been unable to stop the street-fighting.

During his three-day tenure Rifai had not, as might have been expected, ordered the Lebanese army to stop the disturbances, or to restore government authority in parts of Beirut and the seaports of Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre, where independent armed groups had gained a degree of autonomy. The only Christian leader who had called for the resignation of the military government was Raymond Edde. The real reason, however, had been general Arab external pressure. On 28 May Rifai was replaced by Rashid Karami, who had previously announced that he would be standing for president in 1976 in order to challenge the constitution. Lebanese Muslims were pleased by Karami's appointment, but the Christians were doubtful and dismayed.

Karami was delayed in forming a government due to disagreements between the main political parties over the distribution of cabinet seats, and to serious outbreaks of

fighting. During the last week in May and the first days of June, in Beirut alone over 100 people were killed and more than 300 injured in factional clashes. Fighting also occurred in other Lebanese cities and towns. For example on 1 June a detachment of Chamoun's NLP militia engaged in a gun battle with Palestinians in the town of Dabour, some ten miles south of Beirut, then a mainly Christian area. The following day was a bad one in Beirut and barricades were erected in many places, especially on roads linking mutually hostile districts. On the 3rd there was a spate of kidnapping: 22 people were abducted, of whom only 12 were released.

THE ARMENIAN QUARTER

Armenian Christians had difficulty keeping out of the fighting as their main residential area – the Armenian Quarter in Beirut, based on Camp Marash and Jour Hammond, a cramped square mile of narrow streets with a population of about 25 000 – was situated between Christian and Muslim districts. The Armenians did their best to remain neutral and to avoid friction and conflict. However the Christians disapproved of this neutrality, feeling that, as Christians, the Armenians should side openly with them against the Muslims, while the Muslims simply regarded them as part of the Christian community. The Armenians had their own militia, the Dashnak, which mobilised whenever there was any interfactional trouble: barricades were manned around their own quarter in order to keep out both Christians and Muslims.

The first-generation Armenian immigrants had mostly arrived in Beirut from Turkey just after the First World War, and had been allowed to settle on what was then a patch of swampland. As their houses had been built on swampy land they did not have cellars (many houses in Beirut had been constructed with cellars as a normal security precaution) in which they and their descendants could shelter from periodic bombardments. Accordingly, as the Civil War progressed the Armenians suffered casualties from indiscriminate shelling.

THE SAIQA IN BEIRUT

After a lull, fighting flared up again in Beirut in the last week of June 1975, and with it a new danger appeared in Lebanon as the Syrian government began to infiltrate into Beirut the first batch of its Saiqa (the Syrian acronym for the Vanguards of the Popular Liberation War). Their task was to establish Syrian dominance in as many Muslim areas as possible. Saiqa was virtually a commando organisation, led and trained by regular Syrian officers and regarded by many as part of the Syrian regular armed forces.

At the beginning of July serious measures were taken in Christian areas to prepare for the anticipated struggle. Certain Muslim leaders alleged that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was smuggling arms and ammunition to the Falange Party, which it recognised as having the strongest and most virile Christian militia, willing and able to fight against the Palestinians. It was also said that the Falangist militia had been stiffened by Israeli military personnel and agents. Rumours abounded in the highly charged atmosphere of Beirut. Israel certainly had a covert intelligence presence in Beirut to monitor the several Palestinian terrorist groups that maintained offices in this open city.

KARAMI'S RESCUE CABINET

Eventually, on 30 June 1975 Rashid Karami announced the formation of a 'Government of National Unity', which overoptimistically came to be called the 'rescue cabinet'. The cabinet comprised two Muslims, one Druse and three Christians. Karami claimed that he had the support of over half the deputies in the National Assembly, which was probably true at that moment as he had been the unanimous choice of all Muslim leaders, while many Christians preferred him to any of the other alternatives. It was to be a government of reconciliation, which was partly why it had taken so long to form.

Karami's main achievement was to bring about a reconciliation between himself and Camille Chamoun of the NLP.

The two men had not spoken to each other since 1958, when Karami had led the Muslim opposition to Chamoun (then president) in the Second Civil War. Chamoun became deputy prime minister in the so-called 'rescue cabinet'.

THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE FRONT

One of the most vociferous and energetic of the Lebanese leaders was Kamal Jumblatt, a traditional Druse warlord in his native Chouf, the mountainous region to the south-east of Beirut. Jumblatt's National Struggle Front (NSF) was a coalition based on his own Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), which was mainly Druse but also embraced a number of small left-wing groups, including Nasserite socialists, independent Nasserites, Baathists, the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party (SNSP) and the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP). The SNSP's platform was reunification with Syria. Although Jumblatt was at loggerheads with communists in general, he nonetheless included the LCP and the tiny Organisation of Communist Action in Lebanon in his NSF. At the beginning of 1975 almost all these organisations contained Christian members, but as the civil war brought about religious polarisation the Christian elements disappeared from their ranks and the groups became totally Muslim in composition.

UNRULY BEIRUT

Prime Minister Karami ordered his security forces on to the streets to demonstrate their authority by preventing the traditional *baroud*, the indiscriminate firing of weapons into the air by excitable militiamen on almost any pretext. On 1 July General Ghanem, the army commander, was suspended from duty and Colonel Jules Bustante, who had headed the Intelligence Directorate, was temporarily appointed in his place. Fighting continued in parts of Beirut and other cities during the last days of June and the first days of July. The casualty estimate for the month of June was over 200 dead and more than 1000 injured (police

figures). Throughout the civil war and during its aftermath the police assiduously recorded the number of casualties, restricted as they were in the execution of other duties.

At night groups of gunmen were in control of the streets of Beirut. The gendarmes and police stayed close to their barracks or stations, and only came out in strength to deal with particular incidents. The rest of the population stayed indoors. As they manned their respective roadblocks and barricades, Falangist militiamen wore masks or balaclavas over their faces, and Palestinian gunmen hid their features behind their *kufiehs* to avoid identification and possible retribution.

On 29 July Abdul Halim Khaddam, the Syrian foreign minister, visited Beirut in the hope of bringing about a ceasefire favourable to Syria, but as soon as this became known in Egypt, Kamal Jumblatt was asked to fly to Cairo to talk to President Sadat, who was more interested in a peace that would be beneficial to Egypt. Without Jumblatt's agreement the chance of an enduring ceasefire was small. Arafat and Premier Karami tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a truce.

The night of 1 July was one of the most violent so far, with almost continuous firing and explosions, accompanied by the new sound of mortar bombs whistling down through the air. The sheer volume of ammunition expended indicated that the factions involved were receiving considerable external aid from unnamed sources. The government casualty figures for the eight days running up to 1 July were 254 dead and 980 wounded. Previous Lebanese factional fights, which had flared up periodically over the years, had usually quickly subsided, the combatants sitting back to lick their wounds and collect ammunition for the next round, whenever that might occur.

An interesting statistical survey of casualties (*An Anwar*) stated that between 13 April and 6 July 1975, 2314 people had been killed in Lebanon and 6441 injured. The awful realisation was dawning on political and militia leaders and the citizens of Beirut alike, that this time the situation was far more serious than ever before. It was all-out civil war between Lebanese Christians and Muslims, on to which outsiders were throwing inflammable fuel. The governments

of Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar led the way in ordering their nationals to quit Lebanon.

On 2 July yet another brief ceasefire came into effect, which enabled Prime Minister Karami to hold his first cabinet meeting – to date it had been too dangerous for some ministers to make the journey to the National Assembly in West Beirut. One decision made by Karami was that gendarmes would patrol the Christian areas. He asked the PLO to cooperate and operate joint patrols with the Lebanese security forces in West Beirut. Being in a cautious, peaceseeking mood, Arafat felt this might enhance his authority, so he agreed, organising his Palestine Armed Struggle Command (PASC), then little more than a skeleton HQ framework, into a Palestinian military police detachment, armed and clad in smart uniforms with red or brown berets. Selected Fatah members were drafted into the PASC for the purpose.

KIDNAPPING

Kidnapping in Beirut became a dangerous plague. One incident that attracted international attention was the kidnapping of US Colonel Ernest Morgan, a black American officer serving on the staff of the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in Turkey. Morgan touched down at Beirut airport for a stopover on 29 June 1975, and although he was warned not to do so, he left the airport to go into Beirut alone. He was hauled from his taxi by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, General Command (PFLP-GC), led by Ahmad Jabril, a notorious terrorist, in conjunction with the Palestine Struggle Front, led by the Gosheh brothers. Neither group was a constituent of the PLO. Both were extreme Marxists and they worked together, both being based in Karantina, a down-market Shia district adjacent to the port of Beirut, a small enclave within a Christian-dominated area.

In return for Colonel Morgan's safe release the terrorists demanded that the US embassy provide 280 tons of food, 600 tons of building materials and some 3000 sets of clothing for the Muslim poor, the major part to go to

the inhabitants of Karantina. The US embassy refused to comply with these demands and a silent stalemate ensued. An embarrassed Arafat, in his new role as policeman of the Muslim areas, was unable to locate and free the kidnapped American officer.

After a few days, quantities of food began to be distributed among the inhabitants of Karantina, the US embassy falsely denying that it was in any way responsible. These arrangements were made at Prime Minister Karami's request and secretly put into effect by Butros Khouri, a Maronite politician and banker, with the US embassy footing the bill. On 12 July Colonel Morgan was released unharmed. He remarked that he was sure his life had only been spared because he was black. The whole affair was an indication of the unpopularity of the US Middle East policy with the PLO and rejectionist groups at that moment.

GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES

At the beginning of 1975 the Lebanese armed forces were about 15 250 strong (IISS), but as reservists were recalled and conscripts enrolled (a 12-month period of selective conscription was in force) the number gradually rose to about 18 000. Christians, both officers and soldiers, were in the majority, the units being organised on confessional lines. The army consisted of two tank, two reconnaissance, nine infantry, one commando, two artillery and two anti-aircraft units. It possessed just over 100 British, French and American tanks, mostly vintage models, about 180 armoured personnel carriers and other armoured vehicles, about 75 guns and heavy mortars, and 75 anti-aircraft guns.

The small air force, comprising about 1000 men, was almost entirely Christian in composition and was based at airfields in Reyak and Klevat. It had just over 20 combat aircraft (Hunters and Mirages) and ten Alouette helicopters. The tiny navy had only six small coastal craft. The armed forces generally regarded that their main role was national defence, and they tried to avoid involvement in or having to deal with factional fighting.

The gendarmerie, about 5000 strong, was centrally con-

trolled and had a number of light armoured vehicles. The civil police in Beirut numbered about 5000, while the rural police were scattered in small detachments in towns and villages throughout the country, mainly under local control.

CHRISTIAN MILITIAS

The Maronite Falangist militia, the largest of the Christian militias, was at first composed of more than 6000 well-armed, well-trained men. As the civil war dragged on sections of it adopted individual titles, one being the 'Cedars of Lebanon', which used the national emblem as its symbol. The Falange Party had over 60 000 members, and as more and more arms were obtained its militia's strength increased as selected party members were drafted in, and by the end of the year it probably exceeded 10 000.

The second largest Christian militia, also Maronite, was Camille Chamoun's National Liberal Party, which in April 1975 was about 2000 strong. Backed by a huge political organisation, it too expanded as arms became available. The various detachments adopted individual titles, one being 'Chamoun's Tigers'.

There were several much smaller Christian militias, some being little more than armed security guards for their home areas and escorts for their leaders. Perhaps the largest of these was the Zghorta Liberation Army, led by Tony Franjieh and based in the northern mountains. It was about 700 strong, of which a detachment guarded President Franjieh at the Presidential Palace in Baabda, just south of Beirut. Another was the militia of the National Bloc, led by Raymond Edde, which probably had fewer than 200 men. Only a certain proportion of these militias were mobilised, but in emergencies there was a maximum stand-to.

MUSLIM MILITIAS

The Lebanese Muslims had only two militias of any size, one being the militia of Kamal Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist

Party. It was about 3000 strong, mainly Druse, and its main task was to guard its leaders and its home area in the Chouf region. The other was Imam Sadr's Shia militia, later known as Amal (Hope), whose formation and training was considerably assisted by Arafat's Fatah militia. Jumblatt blatantly recruited Shias as well as Druse into his militia, and at times came into conflict with Imam Sadr over the poaching of recruits.

The main fighting elements in the Muslim camp in Lebanon were the Palestinian militias, which were comparatively well-armed and well-trained, but factionally divided amongst themselves. An Israeli spokesman put their number at about 8000, and they were mainly employed in guarding their leaders and bases. Fatah remained the largest Palestinian group, being the mainstay of the pro-Arafat element of the divided PLO. In general the Palestinian militias tried to remain aloof from Lebanese Muslim–Christian clashes and politics, a situation that had prevailed since the ejection of Palestinian militias from Jordan in 1969 and their subsequent clash with the Lebanese Army.

Also active were the militias of the independent Nasserites (led by Ibrahim Kleilat) and later known as the Mourabitoun, or Guardians, the Nasserite socialists, the Baathists and the communists. In addition the Syrian Saiqa probably soon had over 500 commandos in West Beirut. Saiqa waged a systematic campaign against pro-Iraqi groups, for example the Nasserites and the Arab Liberation Front (ALF), which was gradually extended to other smaller groups hostile to Syria and then against pro-Arafat PLO elements, as the Syrian government was sponsoring the rejectionists.

Imam Musa Sadr had some success in recruiting members for his Shia Amal militia, which soon numbered 'several hundreds'. Sadr referred to his militia as the Movement of the Depressed (or Disinherited). On 5 July 1975 the militia was training in the mountains near Baalbek, in the eastern part of the Bekaa Valley, when a huge explosion killed 42 men and wounded another 80 or so. A PLO Fatah officer had been instructing them on explosives and landmines and something had gone wrong. This was another embarrassment for Arafat, who had been officially denying that the PLO was in any way implicated in Lebanese

internal affairs because he did not want to provoke the well-armed Christian militias, which were becoming powerful and aggressive.

Like most prosperous capital cities, Beirut had long had a serious crime problem, and its increasingly lawless situation inevitably gave greater scope to gangs involved in drug smuggling, robbery and other illegal activities. Some of them adopted a political label that enabled them to pose as credible political organisations or militias, under cover of which they were able to work protection and other rackets. On 12 July the Lebanese police announced they had broken up a group calling itself the Arab Communist Organisation, which had been involved in organised crime in Beirut for over two years. Many of the members of another criminal gang, called the Organisation for Socialist Revolutionary Action, which had specialised in bank robberies, were arrested and the gang eliminated.

CIVIL WAR BEGINS

The deceptive calm of the two-month ceasefire was abruptly broken on 26 August 1975, when after a dispute in a cafe in which a Muslim was killed, the small militia of the Greek Catholic residents of Zahle, about 25 miles east of Beirut, clashed with a local Shia militia group. On the 28th a Fatah officer was killed, allegedly when Falangists ambushed an ambulance, which intensified the fighting and within days it was estimated that over 50 people had been killed, many more wounded and a few kidnapped (Radio Lebanon). Pierre Gemayel denied that his Falangist militia had been involved in any way, which was probably true, but in Beirut tempers were aroused. Muslim gunmen lobbed a few grenades into Christian areas, and roadblocks were set up between the city centre and the airport. Arafat, still acting as policeman, tried to remove them, but by this time the Third Lebanese Civil War was well under way.

During September there was a spate of Muslim–Christian clashes across northern Lebanon, centring on Tripoli (the second city of Lebanon), Zahle and Zghorta. On 2 September in Tripoli, an argument over the death of a Muslim

in a traffic accident suddenly developed into an inter-communal frenzy, which increased when Muslim parties called a general strike in protest against Christian attacks on Muslims. The unbridled killing and looting continued for some days, unchecked by higher government intervention. On the 7th a Tripoli-bound bus was stopped near Chekka by gunmen of the Christian Zhorta Liberation Army (ZLA), who summarily executed 12 Muslim passengers. This deepened the conflict, and the following day a group of Tripoli-based Muslim militias banded together. Calling themselves the Unified Military Authority, they marched eastwards to lay siege to Zghorta, some 15 miles distant, and several adjacent Christian-inhabited villages, with the aim of defeating and scattering the formidable ZLA. A bloody stand-off ensued.

In Beirut a series of indecisive emergency cabinet meetings took place in order to discuss what action to take on the Tripoli–Zghorta situation. The Christian ministers insisted that the Lebanese army be sent to help the security forces to restore order, but were outvoted by the Muslim ministers, who were opposed to the army becoming involved in direct military action against the people of Lebanon. Eventually Prime Minister Karami compromised and instructed the Lebanese army to occupy a buffer zone between Tripoli and Zghorta, without directly intervening in either town, where security would remain the responsibility of the gendarmerie and police. This was partially effective in that the hostilities cooled down by the 12th. Karami ordered the removal of the army commander, General Iskander Ghanem, who was put on indefinite leave and replaced by the newly promoted General Hanna Saed, to head the six-man Command Council of senior Muslim and Christian officers.

Dissatisfied with the use of Lebanese army units in an internal security situation, Kamal Jumblatt called for a nationwide Muslim general protest strike. On the night of 14–15 September 12 Muslim militiamen were killed in a clash with the Lebanese army on the Tripoli–Beirut coastal road. This was the first army clash against militiamen since its intervention in the disturbances in Sidon in February, and it provoked an escalation of violence in Beirut, Tripoli

and other towns with mixed Christian–Muslim populations that continued for over a week.

In Beirut the main fighting took place in the suburbs of Ain Rumaniyeh, the Christian stronghold, and the adjacent Muslim quarter of Shia (Chia). Gendarmes and armed police, using armoured vehicles, strove to contain the violence, which mainly took the form of running street battles, while their roof-top marksmen fired on gunmen of both sides.

On the 16th Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Falange Party, issued an ultimatum to the government: if it did not use all the forces at its disposal, including the Lebanese army, to stop the fighting, his Falangists would reconsider their position. The following day the Falange militia launched an offensive against its Muslim counterparts in central Beirut. The struggle was vicious and fierce, involving kidnappings, summary executions and the blowing up of buildings. Periodic announcements of truces and ceasefires were ignored by both sides. On the 19th the government sealed off the commercial and banking quarter of Beirut, and a dusk-to-dawn curfew was imposed on the city.

A Syrian envoy, Abdul Halim Khaddam, arrived on the scene and gained agreement for a ceasefire on the 21st, which was accepted by both sides due to the sheer exhaustion of the combatants and a shortage of ammunition. The police stated that in this five-day spasm of violence over 70 people had been killed and almost 200 injured.

2 The Battle of the Hotels: 1975

On 24 September 1975 the government announced the establishment of a 20-member National Dialogue Committee, consisting of leading representatives of the principal Lebanese communities, whose task was to reestablish peace and initiate negotiations for a lasting political solution. It met on the 30th, the day that the banks and shops in Beirut reopened for the first time for a fortnight. But also on that day, in the Beirut suburb of Fern al-Shebak Falangist militiamen stopped a bus in which eight Druse were travelling, of whom three were killed and the others taken prisoner. This was claimed to be in retaliation for the killing of a Christian by a sniper, and it initiated a wave of kidnapping that lasted all night and into the next day. The Falangists alone seized over 60 Muslims and the police logged over 200 reported instances, but as a result of the personal intervention of Raymond Edde and Kamal Jumblatt, most of them were released safely.

A CEASEFIRE

The National Dialogue Committee met again on 2 October and called on 'all armed men and parties' to withdraw from the streets of Beirut. A ceasefire was arranged and the following day the gunmen withdrew, whereupon the gendarmerie moved in and took over their emplacements and barricades, positioning itself between protagonists at the various intersections. The ceasefire held precariously and a series of meetings took place, attended by Muslim and Christian leaders, both religious and political, but solutions were elusive.

On the 7th, Christian political leaders sought to pressure President Sulieman Franjieh into resigning, as it seemed to them that he was sitting in Baabda Palace doing absolutely

nothing, rather than using his considerable presidential powers to take positive action to restore normality.

THE DAMASCUS AGREEMENT

The ceasefire of 2 October did not last long, as fighting erupted again on the evening of the 7th when Falangists fired rockets into West Beirut, one of which killed almost 20 people standing in a queue outside a baker's shop. The violence spread to the outer western suburbs, which so far had been little affected by the fighting. To the north, Lebanese army units clashed with gunmen in Tripoli and Zghorta.

The following day Prime Minister Karami said he would resign unless the fighting stopped, but on the 9th he was persuaded to go to Damascus to talk to President Assad. Yassir Arafat was also at the meeting, and Assad openly blamed him for the continuing trouble in Lebanon. Assad told Arafat that if he did not control the Palestinian militiamen in Lebanon, whether they were in the PLO or not, he would send in more detachments of his Saiqa to enforce their compliance. Neither Karami nor Arafat wanted Syrian military intervention of any sort. This visit produced what became known as the Damascus Agreement, which although emphasised by Palestinians, basically meant little more than allowing Arafat's PASC to continue to police Muslim parts of Beirut. It also gave the PLO a seat on the Dialogue Committee.

Both Karami and Arafat tried to put pressure on Druse and Shia militias, and those of the Nasserites, Baathists and communists, to lay down their arms, but this was vigorously opposed by Kamal Jumblatt, the undisputed leader of the National Struggle Front.

Yet another truce came cautiously into being on the 11th, and as the guns momentarily fell silent, bulldozers began to sweep away the barricades. Apart from spasmodic bursts of automatic fire and occasional grenade explosions, it seemed as if the ceasefire was holding. This enticed a number of fleeing refugees to return to their homes.

INTERNATIONAL OPINIONS

An emergency meeting of the Arab League, at foreign minister level, was held in Cairo to discuss the Lebanese situation, but it ended inconclusively, merely issuing a vague warning to Israel not to intervene in Lebanon. The meeting was boycotted by Syria, the PLO (which had observer status only at that time) and Libya because they wanted the Lebanese problem to be discussed within an overall Middle East framework, by the UN if possible. The Syrian government was critical of Egypt's attitude towards Lebanon, which was generally to support the *status quo*, that is, to back President Franjieh. President Assad suspected that Egypt wanted to weaken Syria's influence in Lebanon.

The PLO feared that the Arab League delegates might raise the matter of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, and perhaps treat the secret conditions of the Cairo Agreement of 1969 as a bargaining counter. Camille Chamoun, leader of the National Liberal Party, was in favour of Arab League intervention as he thought Egypt would counterbalance the Syrians and the PLO, but some Arab foreign ministers suggested that the solution lay within Lebanon itself, and not within an Arab League framework. On 20 October the US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, persuaded Israel to agree not to take any military action in Lebanon without first consulting the US government, even in the event of direct Syrian armed intervention. The Israeli political leaders were not too happy with this verbal agreement.

HOSTILITIES RESUMED

Meanwhile the hostilities resumed in Beirut. No sooner had the barricades been bulldozed away in one district, than they went up in another. At night the gunmen took over, while the security forces stayed in their barracks and stations. The streets were far too unsafe for ordinary people to venture out. Invariably, at dawn bodies were found and other people had disappeared. On the morning of the 24th, a somewhat typical one, 13 bodies were discovered on the

streets of Beirut, and probably up to 20 people had been kidnapped overnight.

Beirut was fast taking on the appearance of a war-ravaged city. On 18 October the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce estimated that the cost of the damage so far in the civil war amounted to $700 million. It noted that 35 major firms had left the country and predicted that it would take more than two years for the city's economy to recover. The Jordanian government was enacting special laws designed to attract foreign firms, businesses and banks from Lebanon.

Already over 15 000 people had become unemployed because of the fighting, mainly because it was too dangerous to travel to work. More than 20 000 had fled Beirut since the war began, and the few who had returned were hastily pulling out again. On the 26th, British citizens were advised to leave Lebanon, and by the 28th most foreign women and their children had left. Schools were closing, communications were failing, the postal service was uncertain and foreign firms were departing.

Two Americans working for the US Information Center in Beirut, William Dykes and John Gallagher, were seized by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), led by George Habash, while driving to work through a Muslim area on 22 October. This highlighted an ugly feature of this rapidly expanding war – that of calculated kidnapping, which all too often was followed by death and often involved torture. Police figures indicated that 1620 people had been kidnapped in Beirut since 13 April, but it was admitted that this figure could be higher, as not all cases were reported. The police also stated that 338 people were known to have been executed in cold blood.

Dykes and Gallagher were held prisoner for four months, and eventually handed over on 25 February 1976 at the home of Kamal Jumblatt, who had been brought into the negotiations for their release. He stated that he was under the impression that the hostages were being exchanged for two Palestinians held by Israels, but US and Israeli spokesmen denied that any such arrangements had been made.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

At a meeting of the National Assembly on 21 October, which was poorly attended owing to the dangerous situation on the streets, Kamal Assad, a Shia, was reelected as chairman (speaker). In the ensuing debate, Premier Karami attempted to justify his decision not to use the Lebanese army to restore order, saying it would have meant that Lebanese soldiers would be fighting against the Lebanese people. He also rejected the idea of partitioning the country, a move favoured by some Christian politicians.

On the 23rd a cabinet meeting had to be cancelled because of open disagreement between President Franjieh and Prime Minister Karami over control of the security forces, especially the gendarmerie. It was alleged that Karami had been assuming more power than was strictly allocated to him by the constitution. A trial of strength was in progress between the two men. Falangist newspapers were asking 'Who shelled the [Muslim] Ashrafiyeh district?', hinting that Prime Minister Karami, who technically had no control over the security forces, had given the order without consulting Minister of the Interior Camille Chamoun, who had.

THE GREEN LINE

The following day a unit of Lebanese soldiers was ordered into central Beirut and given the task of securing the main routes into and out of the city. However the soldiers hesitated on the outskirts. More than 400 Lebanese soldiers had already been deployed in support of the gendarmerie, to guard buildings, electric power stations and water plants. These measures had been agreed between Prime Minister Karami, Arafat and a representative from Saiqa, which was now both active and influential. Muslims reaffirmed their opposition to the use of the Lebanese army, even in this way. The major part of Muslim West Beirut was now cut off from Christian-inhabited East Beirut by the so-called Green Line of demarcation, across which Christians and Muslims glared or fired at each other.

The Maronite League and the Order of Maronite Monks,

both hard-line groups, issued a joint declaration on 15 October denouncing the presence in Lebanon of armed foreign fighters, both Palestinian and Syrian, and demanding that Lebanese government authority be restored to the whole of the country. However it specified areas where the Lebanese writ did not run.

The adverse situation was bedevilled by feuding political leaders, hardly one of whom agreed with any of the others. Pierre Gemayel demanded that the Lebanese army be used to restore order as a first priority, but this was opposed by Kamal Jumblatt, who insisted that the first priority was to draw up a plan for constitutional reform. Both threatened to withdraw from the National Dialogue Committee unless they got their way.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS

External interests were pressing in on Lebanon, particularly the PLO, which had nowhere else to go. While seemingly not giving an inch, Arafat was in fact bending with the wind. Posing as a man of peace, he was lobbying to be given a seat at the Geneva Peace Conference, which he hoped would soon be reconvened. It was therefore not in his interests for the fighting to continue. As Syria had several hundred Saiqa commandos in Beirut, it too was able to exert considerable influence. Saiqa had been able to seize control of large sections of Muslim areas from the PLO, simply because it was better armed, better trained and better disciplined than any of the Palestinian groups. However Saiqa had been not able to penetrate the Palestinian refugee camps. Syria, and hence Saiqa, was very much against Arafat as it suspected he might, under American encouragement, enter into some sort of indirect negotiations with Israel. Iraq supported and armed a few small groups in Lebanon, which were actively hostile to Saiqa, as did Libya.

The United States, through Henry Kissinger, continued its attempt to exert its influence on Lebanon, but with little success. The Soviet Union also pulled the few strings it had through its grip on the Syrian government, which relied completely on the Soviets for arms and munitions, and

partly through the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP). The Soviet Union had little success, nor did France, which was trying to regain its former influence in Lebanon.

THE LEBANESE COMMUNIST PARTY

The LCP, legalised in 1970 by Kamal Jumblatt when he was minister of the interior, had in the intervening five years developed into a powerful movement. Working to establish its authority in mainly Shia and Druse areas in the centre and south of the country, it had established 'people's committees' with local executive power. The LCP was working on the assumption that one day the Palestinians would leave Lebanon, at which point the people's committees would spring to life, seize local power, defy the central government and fight to make Lebanon a communist state.

Even before the civil war had begun there were signs that Jumblatt regretted legalising the LCP when he realised what it was doing. On occasions he had even urged Christian groups not to reach any compromise with it, as its ultimate aim was to seize national power. In his own Druse villages he was already being challenged by the people's committees. As the civil war dragged on, Christian and other non-Muslim elements disappeared from the LCP, and its active membership became almost exclusively Shia. Jumblatt strove to bring the LCP firmly into his National Struggle Front, but he did not trust it.

As Prime Minister Karami fell more and more under the spell of the Syrian president, as manifested by his obstinate refusal to call out the Lebanese army to restore order in case it might clash with Saiqa, President Franjieh froze into helpless inactivity. Called upon to resign, even by Maronites, he held grimly on to office, mainly because he could not bear to be replaced by any of his Maronite rivals, such as Edde, Chamoun or Gemayel. Because of his reluctance to use his presidential veto, Franjieh often played into Karami's hands.

The aims of the main protagonists were becoming crystalised. The Christians wanted to retain their supremacy and restore Lebanese sovereignty over the whole country;

the Lebanese Muslims, who now included the Sunnis, wanted constitutional amendments that would give them at least equality, and preferably supremacy; the Palestinians wanted to survive as an independent body in Lebanon; while Syria, through Saiqa, was intent upon making Lebanon into a client state.

THE SECURITY COMMITTEE

The unsettled situation meant that it was sometimes dangerous for deputies to travel to the National Assembly, and as a consequence it was often unable to obtain the required quorum (said to be 50 members) to conduct business. Accordingly, on 28 October 1975 Prime Minister Karami set up a nine-man Security Committee, which included leaders of the major communities, to work with him in permanent session. Shortly after this announcement there was a shooting incident on the steps of the National Assembly building. Two men were killed, but Pierre Gemayel, who was standing nearby at that moment, was not harmed. This indicated the bitter animosity that prevailed.

The ceasefire of 11 October did not last long and spasmodic fighting resumed, mainly in Beirut, but also in Tripoli, where a Saiqa detachment had been sent by President Assad to restore order and imprint Syria's influence.

BATTLE OF THE HOTELS

What became known as the Battle of the Hotels began on 24 October 1975. If lasted several months and was never really resolved in a neat military fashion. The battle was for possession of a small complex adjacent to the seafront in the north-western corner of Beirut, in which were closely grouped a number of modern hotels, some of them high-rise and not all of which had been completed. Another tactically valuable building in this area was the as yet unfinished 28-storey Rizk Tower (formerly known as the Murr Building). These buildings towered over the buildings in adjacent areas, both Christian and Muslim. So far this district

had escaped the effects of the civil war, and most of the hotels were functioning normally.

The first move was made by the Mourabitoun, the militia of Ibrahim Kleilat, leader of the Independent Nasserite group, which he had labelled the 'Hawks of Zeidani'. The Mourabitoun moved into the empty Rizk Tower building, from where they were able to fire rockets down on the Christian enclaves. As a counter move the Falangist militia adopted positions between and around the main hotels, but were generally at a disadvantage as they were under constant observation and fire from the Rizk Tower. Falangists also moved into three of the hotels: the Holiday Inn, St George's Hotel and the Phoenicia. A five-day battle ensued between the two rival forces, in which the steady supply of ammunition did not seem to be problem.

A ceasefire was agreed on 29 October to allow the staff and residents of the hotels, many of them tourists, to be freed: More than 200 people were trapped in the Holiday Inn alone. The evacuation was carried out by the gendarmerie, using armoured vehicles, and hostilities were resumed as soon as the evacuation had been completed. On the 31st another ceasefire was arranged to enable the hotel residents and staff to return to collect their belongings, if they so wished.

Prime Minister Karami tried to demilitarise the hotels complex, but the Falangists, who had taken possession of several more hotels, refused to leave their positions until the Muslims in the Rizk Tower had been replaced by gendarmes. Karami had managed to persuade Kleilat to withdraw his Mourabitoun militiamen, but as the Falangists showed no sign of withdrawing, Kleilat's men hastily returned.

A rival group – the Nasserite Socialists, sometimes known as the Nasserite Corrective Movement, led by Issam al-Arab, a pro-Libyan organisation – now moved into this battle area and occupied the Palm Beach and Excelsior Hotels. Karami's ceasefire, said to be the eleventh in six weeks, never became effective, and neither did his demilitarisation plan, so the Battle of the Hotels continued. On 3 November the two Nasserite groups were reinforced by Saiqa elements, which caused anxiety not only to Karami, who was still

denying any Syrian involvement in the fighting, but also to Arafat, who feared that his men would be pushed aside. Other small groups progressively joined in the battle on the Muslim side, including Baathists and communists.

On the Christian side the brunt of the battle was borne by the Falange militia, although the National Liberal Party militia lent its assistance later on. The extra Saiqa fire-power drove the Christians from the Phoenicia and St George's Hotels, but they held on to the Holiday Inn. Falangist reinforcements were rushed to the scene.

By this time snipers and sentries were peering over practically every window sill of the Rizk Tower and adjacent occupied hotels, while the streets below were littered with blasted or burning vehicles and the debris of barricades. On 1 November the staff of the nearby British embassy, a little further along the seafront, were busy burning their confidential documents, and a British warship was ordered to remain in East Mediterranean waters, ready to evacuate British nationals.

When the civil war began the fighting was generally restricted to certain traditionally troublesome areas, a small part of Beirut and other parts of the country. Elsewhere life continued fairly normally. The next phase was when both Muslim and Christian militias took to the streets to try to gain dominance over them. Once loose on the streets, their leaders had difficulty controlling and restraining them, and at times some of the militiamen exhibited an excess of zeal that transcended the normal Geneva rules of civilised warfare. In this period militias on the same side sometimes fought each other, as each sought to expand its own territorial base and area of domination at the expense of the others.

At a meeting of the National Dialogue Committee, Prime Minister Karami expounded his plan for a ceasefire, demilitarisation of the hotel complex and making the streets safe enough for people to go to work again. Basically it meant withdrawing the ill-trained, ill-disciplined militias of both sides from the streets and returning them to their traditional areas. The streets would then be patrolled by joint gendarmerie–PLO teams. Christians were not included in the joint-patrol proposal, which caused them to protest

and say they would patrol their own areas. The plan was to be put into operation on the evening of 3 November, when all barricades would be bulldozed away.

A unit of the Lebanese army, positioned on the outskirts of Beirut, was ordered to move towards the centre, and on the 4th the fighting and sniping gradually subsided, apart from in the hotel complex, where no one would agree to withdraw from their positions. A little later Karami managed to persuade a few to make a partial withdrawal, but that was all. Itchy trigger fingers were responsible for occasional sniper fire. Minister of the Interior Chamoun revived the special Gendarmerie commando detachment, known as 'Squad 16', to search out and destroy snipers. This truce was to be supervised by a higher military committee, comprising representatives from the PLO and the various militias.

Many of the people of Beirut, who had been marooned for days in their apartments and houses, short of food and money, cautiously ventured on to the streets again. The partisan fighters too welcomed the respite, as they wanted the banks and shops to reopen. By 6 November commercial life in Beirut was stirring again. Criminals and militias began to work protection rackets. As the joint gendarmerie–PLO patrols roamed the main streets, the existence of the Green Line became ominously obvious as few people dared cross it, or even walk along it. About this time a radio personality, Sherif Akhawi of the government station Radio Lebanon, made his contribution to the welfare of the citizens of Beirut. He advised people of danger points, barricade positions, the safest routes, which shops and banks were open, which hospitals and medical posts were functioning and other information of vital local importance.

CHANGING DOMINANCE

At meetings of the National Dialogue Committee, the Security Committee and the cabinet on 4 November the realisation suddenly dawned that three great dangers threatened. One was the growing power of Kamal Jumblatt, as he wove the left-wing Muslim groups tightly into his National

Struggle Front. Jumblatt made little secret of his scant regard for, and impatience with, Sunnis and Christians.

The second danger was that of displaced Palestinian immigrants who, resigned to the loss of their Palestine homeland, were planning to make a permanent home in Lebanon. Already they had spread out and physically dominated up to two thirds of the country, especially in the centre, the south and along the coastline. The main Christian heartland, spreading northwards from East Beirut, was in danger of being cut off from the coast by them.

The third danger was the degree of influence Syria was gaining in Lebanon through its Saiqa units, which had taken virtual control of many of the streets in West Beirut. President Assad's soothing explanation that his Saiqa was the only disciplined Muslim body that was both available and capable of restoring order was not a consoling one. The only compensating factor from a purely Lebanese point of view was that Saiqa and the PLO tended to neutralise each other.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Arafat made a well-publicised gesture on 3 November. With a levy of international reporters and photographers he accompanied a PLO convoy of vehicles carrying food and necessities to the Wadi Abu Jamil district, where for some five days about 60 Jews had been trapped in a synagogue while the fighting swirled around them. The Jewish community in Beirut had shrunk to about 3000 or so, and mainly lived in Wadi Abu Jamil, a small scrap of 'neutral' territory that attracted Falangists in their expansionist operations.

ARMS SUPPLIES

For some weeks an astounding amount of ammunition had been expended daily by both sides in their battles with each other. It was an open secret how it was obtained. Lebanese Muslims were importing arms and ammunition

through the Muslim-dominated ports of Tripoli, Tyre and Sidon, as were the PLO and the smaller rejectionist groups, while Saiqa of course received them overland from Syria, whose armoury was constantly replenished by the Soviet Union. The Christian militias were buying their munitions from abroad and smuggling them in through the Christian-held port of Junieh, just to the north of Beirut, or though Beirut airport, where most of the staff were Christian. Early in October a consignment of arms had been discovered by Muslims working at the airport, destined for President Franjieh's ZLA. Jumblatt openly accused Israel and the American CIA of supplying arms to the Christians.

Weapons often required repair, and a host of small workshops sprang up for the purpose. The Falange militia, for example, had produced five homemade armoured vehicles, which had made their initial appearance at the Battle of the Hotels.

On the night of 5 November a freighter without a flag, but believed to be Belgian, slipped into Junieh harbour carrying a consignment of arms. The news reached Prime Minister Karami, who also held the defence portfolio. Karami ordered a Lebanese naval craft to search the vessel. The Lebanese naval officer reported back – through General Hanna Said, the new army commander – that the ship was carrying cattle, not arms.

The following morning the members of the Higher Military Committee, dissatisfied with this report, persuaded Karami to send a Lebanese army detachment to Junieh to search the ship, but as they neared the port, bells in all the churches in the area pealed out the alarm and the Christian militias sprang to arms. Faced with this opposition, the army detachment at first hesitated and then simply stood aside. Jumblatt demanded that the army sink the ship, but the soldiers did not respond. When he heard what was happening President Franjieh stirred himself, countermanded Karami's order and sent the soldiers back to barracks.

Meanwhile the arms had been unloaded, mainly overnight, and were being distributed under the direction of Tony Franjieh, commander of the ZLA, assisted by Dory and Dany Chamoun of the NLP militia and Bashir and

Amin Gemayel of the Falangist militia. That night Arafat conferred with Sheikh Hassan Khalid, the Sunni religious leader in Beirut, who was one of the last of the responsible Sunni leaders to realise that the civil war had in fact devolved into one between Lebanese Muslims and Christians, and that the division was no longer a strictly political one. He was at last convinced, or converted, by Arafat.

Junieh continued to be used by Christians for arms smuggling, although smaller craft were used to bring consignments of arms ashore at less conspicuous places. The Christians were assisted to some extent by the Israeli navy, which closely patrolled the waters near Junieh to prevent any hostile naval interference. Syria had ignominiously lost its small navy of about 26 missile and torpedo boats during the October War of 1973, and although a few had been repaired and recommissioned they were not used adventurously. Israeli naval craft, hovering outside Muslim Lebanese ports, hampered the smuggling of arms to Muslims.

The following day (7 November) Karami claimed that General Hanna Saed had lied to him about the cargo of the freighter and Jumblatt demanded the general's dismissal for openly siding with Christians. Jumblatt forcibly reiterated his ideas for reform of the Lebanese army, insisting that a military command council should take all responsibility for major military decisions.

Pierre Gemayel also spoke up, accusing the Muslim leaders of hypocrisy and citing several examples of arms being supplied to Muslims. He said that for weeks arms shipments had been openly unloaded at Sidon and Tyre, to be taken under escort to the Bekas Valley for distribution to Muslim militias, and that only a few days previously six small naval craft had unloaded cargoes of arms at night at Karantina dock in Beirut, now occupied by the Mourabitoun. Gemayel complained in the National Assembly that 'We pay a lot of money for our arms, which we buy with great difficulty, and only through great sacrifice. Others get them free and with ease.'

The incident at Junieh not only exposed the large-scale flow of arms into Lebanon; it also resulted in new arms trails being opened. Attempts were made to cut them off, for example the Falangists tried to block the road running

from Beirut to the south, along which arms landed at Sidon and Tyre were carried north into Muslim West Beirut. They also tried to block the main highway from Beirut to Damascus, along which arms were taken to Muslim militias in the Bekaa Valley.

POWER SHARING PROBLEMS

On 15 November 1975 Prime Minister Karami announced that President Franjieh had agreed to discuss proposals for the reform of Lebanon's 'confessional' system, particularly with a view of having equal numbers of Muslims and Christians in the National Assembly. This was rejected by Jumblatt and other Muslim leaders as being 'insufficiently fundamental', meaning they wanted majority, not equality. By this time it was thought that the number of Lebanese living in Lebanon was about 2.5 million (UN estimate), of which Muslims were now in the slight majority, a majority that was steadily increasing owing to the higher Muslim birth rate.

Awareness of this demographic change caused the idea of partition to become a significant talking point amongst Christians. Christian leaders abhorred the idea of sharing power with Muslims. The broad outline discussed was that if Lebanon had to be partitioned it would be in three parts: the north would be dominated by Syrians, the centre by Christians and the south by Israelis. The Christians obviously wanted a strong and friendly Israel as their southern neighbour and did not relish a Muslim enclave between it and them. The Muslims were flatly against partition of any sort.

MORE VIOLENCE

On the night of 19 November fighting erupted in most parts of Beirut, breaking the ceasefire that had more or less held since the 2nd. This continued for some three days, when another truce was declared. The situation in the capital was deteriorating badly as gunmen on the streets became

folk heroes, especially to the young. Most foreign commercial concerns had left and their former employees were swelling the ranks of the unemployed, thought now to be in excess of 100 000. Many of the unemployed were drawn into the various militias, most of which were anxious to expand. With the plentiful availability of new weapons and ample ammunition, eager young militiamen, some very young indeed, came to have a vested interest in anarchy. Plain banditry was rife, and many shuttered shops and business premises were broken into and looted in some parts of the city.

The Tel Zaatar Palestinian refugee camp was in a virtual state of siege, being at the mercy of Christian snipers in the overlooking highrise buildings around it. Joint gendarmerie–PASC patrols moved along the main streets, and also along the Green Line, a procedure disliked by Christians but tacitly supported by the Karami government because it was unable to come up with a better initiative. The Falangist and NLP militias barred the joint patrols from their districts and the Green Line became a long 'Death Valley'.

On 23 November, according to Beirut police figures, 27 people were killed in the capital, 327 were injured and 74 were kidnapped or reported missing. The previous day the police had reported that 47 people had been killed and 73 wounded on the Green Line alone. During the first three weeks of November there had been over 150 kidnappings. On the 19th a British businessman had been shot dead in the city.

The last meeting of the National Dialogue Committee, almost the only remaining forum where all Lebanese leaders still met together, was held on 24 November. Chamoun boycotted the meeting and some members, including Gemayel, walked out. Prime Minister Karami angrily rejected partition, and as less that half the deputies were able to reach the National Assembly the session scheduled for the 25th had to be abandoned. A street battle was actually in progress a hundred yards or so away in Martyrs' Square, the start of the Green Line – 15 people were killed and 62 injured.

The following day Ghassam Tweini, editor of *Al Najar*, suggested that the only solution would be for the rival armed

forces to be disarmed by the Lebanese army and merged into a National Guard, under Lebanese military control, but it was too late for reasonable and moderate suggestions as the civil war was by now well under way and the rival militias had the bit between their teeth. On the 28th Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia warned Lebanon against partition. His words were partisan in that he praised Karami's courage and statemanship but omitted any reference to President Franjieh.

THE PAY-DAY TRUCE

On 29 November President Franjieh and Prime Minister Karami both made appearances on television, which was coming into universal use in Lebanon, and on the radio, appealing for an end to the strife. Both men realised they were fast losing all control over events, but their joint appeal fell on deaf ears. Thousands of young militiaman were now too excited to listen to calls for reason and restraint. The president and the prime minister announced a reconciliation programme, but no one was interested. These appeals were followed by what became known as a 'payday truce' to enable gunmen and others to draw money from banks to buy food. Pay-day truces became a familiar feature of this civil war.

November ended with factional fighting in Karantina between Kleilat's Mourabitoun, sponsored by Iraq, and the militia of the Nasserite Socialists, led by Issam al-Arab and sponsored by Libya. December began with attempts to persuade Karami to broaden his cabinet to include representatives of the major combatant groups, so that the reconciliation plan might be given a chance to work. Karami consistently refused.

BLACK SUNDAY

Provoked by finding four Christian bodies at dawn on 6 December 1975, Falangist militiamen rampaged through Beirut, shooting and killing Muslims indiscriminately. At

least 140 people died and many more were injured, the police, still obsessed with record keeping, put the casualty figure at over 400. The Soviet diplomats were injured in this frenzy, which became known to Muslims as 'Black Sunday'.

The Muslim backlash came the following day, which was one of savage reprisals. Over 150 people were kidnapped, many of whom were killed in cold blood. Muslim militias launched attacks against Rumaniyeh and barricades sprang up in that area. By the 8th, fighting between Christians and Palestinians, the latter joined by Lebanese Muslims, had resumed its former fury in several parts of the capital. Sherif Akhawi, of Radio Lebanon, warned his listeners that no street in Beirut was safe for them that day.

During the next couple of days there was fighting for Wadi Abu Jamil, the Jewish Quarter, which had been taken over by Falangists. First the Muslims drove the Christians from the district, but the Christians then rallied and made a series of counterattacks that enabled them to regain the territory.

Despite the nominal ceasefire on 8 November, the Battle of the Hotels flared up again as the Mourabitoun, with assorted allies and in conjunction with Saiqa, launched a series of attacks. In this round of assaults Soviet rocket-propelled grenades and 106 mm recoilless rifles mounted on vehicles were brought into action for the first time.

Ibrahim Kleilat, the key commander in this battle, was determined to occupy this vital tactical area and inflict such a defeat on the Falangists that they would have to sue for peace. For two days there was a seesaw battle for the Phoenicia Hotel, with first one side and then the other making gains, and although the Christians were eventually driven out from some of the hotel buildings, they managed to hold firmly on to their main base at the Holiday Inn.

On 10 December the Muslims held desperately on to the Alcazar Hotel, even though part of it had been set on fire, and also took possession of the disputed Phoenicia Hotel. The following day the Muslims launched an assault against both Christians and the gendarmerie, and while Christians repulsed it, the gendarmerie withdrew from several

positions but took over the unfinished Hilton Hotel. On the 12th, fighting slackened off when it was realised that in spite of the five-day offensive both sides had more or less retained their original positions. It was believed that during the first fortnight in November more than 600 people had been killed and about 1000 injured in the fighting. (This indicates the fierceness of the battle, in which little quarter was given.)

Previously (the 10th), Prime Minister Karami had announced that the Higher Military Committee had secured another truce, but as the committee meetings had been boycotted by the Muslims in protest against the Black Sunday killings, it did not come into effect until the 15th when the Syrians, including Saiqa leaders, and the PLO put pressure on the Muslim militia commanders.

The gendarmerie, working with the PASC, tried to get between the combatants in the hotel complex, at first without success. Arafat stepped in as peacemaker and eventually persuaded the Muslim militias to quit the Rizk Tower and certain hotels, and to withdraw a little way, allowing the gendarmerie to step into vacated positions. The exceptions were the St George's Hotel, held by Muslims, and the Holiday Inn, held by Falangists: neither would budge.

One significant feature of this round of fighting in Beirut was that the Sunnis had at last wholeheartedly entered into the civil war, with their militias fighting on the side of left-wing Muslims against Christians. The most prominent group was that formed by Saeb Salam, a former prime minister and current political leader of the Beirut Sunnis. Salam had obtained funds from Saudi Arabia to set up his 'Pioneers of Reform' militia.

GENDARMERIE DISLOYALTY

The *Isabella*, a Panamanian freighter, was seized in Tripoli harbour on 17 December 1975 by Shia militiamen, who placed explosives on board and threatened to blow up the ship unless 1000 tons of flour were distributed among the Muslim poor in the city. In the disturbances accompanying this incident a section of the gendarmerie broke ranks and

sided with the Muslims. This was the first incident of disloyal fragmentation in the security forces. On the 19th the ship's owners agreed to the terrorists' demand and provided the flour.

On 17 December President Franjieh accused the Palestinians of fomenting the recent spates of violence. Kamal Jumblatt objected to this allegation, and again demanded the resignation of both President Franjieh and Minister of the Interior Chamoun as a precondition to reconciliation. Other pressures were brought to bear on Franjieh to resign, but he remained adamant and inactive in the presidential palace at Baabda.

On the 20th Kassem Imad, the Druse governor of North Lebanon, was shot dead outside this home in Tripoli, allegedly by Christian terrorists. During the next few days several clashes occurred in and around Tripoli, in which both Christians and Muslims used armoured vehicles that had either been hijacked from the security forces or the Lebanese army, or brought to them by defectors.

FUTILE PEACEMAKING

Several well-meaning but scheming peacemakers shuttled ineffectively to and fro, trying to bring their sort of peace to Lebanon. The French still hankered after involvement in their former mandated territory, and in October President Giscard d'Estaing had suggested to President Franjieh that France might undertake a peace initiative. This had been accepted, and a French delegation had eventually arrived in Beirut on 19 November. The delegation had met the main leaders, including Arafat, but had made little impression on them.

A Syrian delegation, led by General Hikmat Chehabi, arrived in Beirut on 18 December, the day in which 40 or 50 bodies were recovered from the Phoenicia Hotel. Syria had become alarmed because certain Muslim groups were receiving money and arms from the Iraqi and Libyan governments, which were encouraging them actively to oppose Saiqa and the PLO. The Soviet Union had also been bypassing the Syrian government and sending arms direct to

the LCP and other extreme left-wing militias. Syria was of course sending arms in quantity to its own Saiqa.

Christian militias were openly boasting they were obtaining arms and ammunition from Palestinian and Muslim militias by simply 'buying' them. Alarmed, Prime Minister Karami made a quick visit to Damascus to try to persuade President Assad to restrict the flow of Syrian arms into Lebanon: he received a negative answer. On the 25th an Iraqi delegation led by Tariq Aziz, the information minister, arrived in Beirut, but because of Syrian pressure they were not warmly received. Syria and Iraq were each governed by opposing wings of the Baathist Party, and the quarrel was a bitter one.

Beginning on 26 December 1975, King Khalid of Saudi Arabia paid a three-day state visit to Damascus, and while there he agreed to back a Syrian instigated five-year plan for a political settlement for Lebanon. This included abolition of the confessional system, especially in the administration of the country, the equal distribution of seats in the National Assembly, election of the prime minister by deputies, the creation of a higher economic committee, and confirmation of agreements for the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

On the 28th a huge UNRWA food store was broken into by a mob and the contents were seized by militias. The following day the UNRWA HQ in Beirut, which had been closed since Black Sunday, moved to Amman in Jordan.

President Franjieh's end of year suggestion was that there should be a national census, his proviso being that 'overseas' Lebanese, who were mostly Christians, should be included. Prime Minister Karami said he would only agree if the census was confined to those actually living in Lebanon. Nothing emerged from this suggestion: the Christians and Muslims were too far apart.

The year came to a violent close in Lebanon. The first phase (April–December 1975) of the civil war had caused great loss of life and much wanton destruction, leaving Lebanon in a state of paralysis and anarchy. At least 15 000 people had been killed and about 50 000 injured (*Le Monde*); other estimates were higher. Hundreds of homes had suffered bomb or rocket damage; the homeless had yet to be counted.

The struggle was now openly one between Christians and Muslims. With the veil of political overtones and divisions torn aside, arms were pouring in, militias were expanding and becoming more belligerent. The gendarmerie had started to crack, but so far the barely used Lebanese army retained its discipline, remaining intact.

3 Violent Polarisation: 1976

On 3 January 1976 Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Falange Party, publicly denounced the Cairo Agreement of 1969, which allegedly guaranteed the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, and together with Camille Chamoun, leader of the National Liberal Party, rejected any suggestion of abandoning the National Covenant of 1943, which had established the confessional system. Both leaders virtually declared war on the armed Palestinian militias active in the country and mounted a new propaganda campaign against them. They Syrian foreign minister, Abdul Halim Khaddam, accused the Lebanese Christian leaders of seeking to partition the country and warned that this would mean Syrian military intervention.

On the 5th the NLP militia mounted a blockade on the Tel Zaatar Palestinian refugee camp in the Beirut area, which caused Kamal Jumblatt, leader of the National Struggle Front (NSF) militias, to boycott the Higher Military Committee. Jumblatt rose to the Christian challenge, and as his NSF had also attracted Palestinian militias he referred to the enlarged coalition as the National Front, or sometimes as the National Democratic Front (NDF), which took a prominent part in the fighting in 1976. Tension rose across the country as Christian militias attacked Muslim positions, which provoked Muslim counterattacks. The fighting was reported to be the heaviest so far in the war.

The Christian blockade of Tel Zaatar camp continued, and on the 11th a combined Muslim–Palestinian National Democratic Movement (NDM) militia detachment seized a Lebanese army relief convoy that was trying to run the blockade, capturing the vehicles and soldiers. This was thought to be a deliberate ploy to involve the Lebanese army in factional fighting. The army issued an ultimatum demanding the release of its soldiers and vehicles, failing which military action would be taken. Arafat, who did not

want to antagonise the Lebanese government to this extent, rushed forward and obtained their immediate release, which momentarily calmed the situation. Later that day Falangist militiamen fired on Lebanese army vehicles, killing two soldiers.

In response to the Christian blockade of Tel Zaatar, on the 13th a detachment of Druse militia, estimated to number almost 1000, descended from the Chouf hills to lay siege to several Christian villages just to the east of Beirut. After another five-day siege, the Falangist militia captured the Debayeh Palestinian refugee camp, some 10 miles north of Beirut, said to house predominantly Christian Palestinians. NDM militias reacted by launching attacks on Christian positions in the areas.

THE NDM TAKES DAMOUR

Next, NDM militias besieged the Christian town of Damour, south of Beirut and a stronghold of Chamoun's NLP militia. On the 16th, Lebanese air force combat planes attacked the besieging Muslims and Druse as they were setting up an ambush against a Lebanese army relief convoy to Damour, breaking up the ambush and causing casualties. Jumblatt claimed that the air attack had been ordered personally by President Franjieh at Chamoun's request, without the knowledge of Prime Minister Karami but with the connivance of General Hanna Saed, the army commander. This was the type of direct intervention that aggressive Christian militia leaders wanted. However, on the 20th NDM militiamen overran Damour and other adjacent Christians villages. As the inhabitants had to be evacuated by sea to Christian areas north of Beirut, this was seen as ethnic cleansing.

However the Christian militias were ahead of them, as on the 18th the Falange militia had attacked Karantina on the northern Beirut seafront, held by the Mourabitoun. The object was to secure a direct line of communication between the adjacent Ashrafiyeh district and the Christian hinterland, north of the capital. After killing or driving out the Muslim defenders and population, the Falange militia carried out a wholesale devastation of Karantina, provoking the Muslims to call for a Jihad against them.

THE SYRIANS ARRIVE

Another ceasefire was brokered in Damascus, to take effect from 17 January 1976. A group of 50 Syrian military officers were to be sent to Beirut to monitor it. There were also to be Syrian representatives on the Lebanese Higher Military Committee, which thus became a six-man body: two Lebanese, two Palestinians and two Syrians. Prime Minister Karami wanted to resign, but was persuaded to stay on by the Syrians, who seemed to be suddenly gaining immense influence.

Still grasping on to power and refusing to be swept aside, President Franjieh sought other allies. He visited President Assad in Damascus on 7 February to talk about Lebanese reforms. This resulted in a 17-point programme being drawn up on the 14th, under which the Muslims would gain a greater share of political power while the Christians would retain most of their traditional positions. Assad did not want either sect to become too dominant or too weak as he had his own secret agenda for Lebanon, which was to turn it into a Syrian protectorate. On the 18th Prime Minister Karami announced certain reforms and a reconstruction programme. General Hanna Saed was given the task of overseeing the precarious ceasefire and clamping down on looting and robberies. The Falangist Party openly supported this plan, the Sunni Muslims were loosely in favour, but the NDM militias were absolutely against it, as were the Palestinian militias.

MUTINY

Meanwhile, in the eastern part of the Bekaa Valley on the border with Syria there were a number of Palestinian training camps and bases, intermixed with detachments of the Lebanese army. On 19 January a large detachment of the Palestinian Liberation Army crossed into the Bekaa Valley from Syria, and at once became involved in fighting with Lebanese soldiers. During this bout, which lasted for a couple of days, a large group of Muslim soldiers, under the leadership of Lieutenant Ahmad Khataib of the Lebanese army,

refused to fight against their coreligionists and defected to form what became known as the Lebanese Arab Army (LAA). Khataib announced his liaison with Jumblatt's NDM until such time as the Lebanese army, which seemed about to fall to pieces, was reconstituted. During the following month more defecting Muslim soldiers joined Khataib, to the point where he was able independently to control a large section of the southern part of the valley.

Early in March Khataib's LAA attacked the Christian town of Koubayat, which indirectly gave rise to a mutiny in the Lebanese army garrison at Junieh, where a number of Christian soldiers demanded to be sent to fight to protect their home town, and departed when their request was not granted. The situation in Koubayat stabilised to some extent, but discontent and mutiny remained in the air, and on the 8th a number of Muslim Lebanese army soldiers in southern garrisons declared their support for the LAA. Military morale was collapsing, and senior officers in the Lebanese army called for the removal of President Franjieh and the formation of a new government. This mood spread like wildfire to other garrisons.

General Hanna Saed offered the discontented deserters a general amnesty if they all returned to barracks, and at the same time called on the government to put a radical end to the events. The offer was rejected by the rebel soldiers, who subverted more garrisons. On the 11th the army officer commanding the North Lebanon military district was shot dead at a roadblock when driving from Beirut to Tripoli, which touched off a series of Christian reprisal activities in the Tripoli area.

REBEL MILITARY COMMAND COUNCIL

On the evening of 11 March, Brigadier Abdul Aziz Ahdab (a Muslim), the military commander of the Beirut area, declared a state of emergency. He assumed the title of provisional military governor of Lebanon and demanded the resignation of Franjieh. Ahdab appeared on TV to present his 'Communique No. 1': he gave the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies eight days to elect a new president, called on

all army units to support his 'corrective movement', supported the previous amnesty offer to mutinous soldiers and ordered the army to fire on anyone engaged in subversive activities. He also pledged full support for Syria's mediation efforts and existing agreements with the Palestinians.

The following day Brigadier Ahdab created a Military Command Council to govern the country pending transfer of power to a new president. He claimed to have military support at a high level, and his supporters probably included General Hanna Saed, the commander of the air force, the head of the military intelligence branch and others, although they remained in the background for the moment and refrained from criticizing or encouraging the current course of events. Both the Falange Party and the NLP came out against Brigadier Ahdab, as did Kamal Jumblatt, leader of the National Democratic Movement, the latter declaring that he wanted a change of government, but not through a military coup. President Franjieh refused to step down, ignoring the Chamber of Deputies' call to do so (the motion was passed by 68 votes out of 99). Syria did not want Franjieh to go either.

Brigadier Ahdab and Lieut Khataib agreed that the army should be reconstructed on a non-confessional basis, that it should be an Arab army, and should be welded into a real fighting force capable of making a serious contributions to the Arab–Israeli confrontation. According to *Le Monde*, Brigadier Ahdab was supported by the 2000 men of the Beirut Command, 10 000 nominally under General Hanna Saed's command and 2000 in the Lebanese Arab Army, which seemed to leave over 20 000 potentially military 'loyalists'. Opposing him were ranged about 1000 Presidential Guards (members of the ZLA), 10 000 Falangists, 7000 members of the Zghorta Liberation Army and 2000 NLP militiamen. This was probably as good an estimate as any at this confused moment.

ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

On 15 March 1976 a two-pronged 'rebel' advance was made towards the presidential palace in Baabda, but Franjieh had

already decamped to the comparative safety of Junieh. The advance was halted the following day by Muslim militias, supported by regular Syrian troops and Saiqa detachments, who rushed forward and took up blocking positions between the opposing armed forces. On the 17th Brigadier Ahdab compromised and said he would cooperate with the Syrians. This negated the so-called 'Lebanese Solution', which was aimed at settling internal difference without foreign intervention and had caused a breach between the Syrian government and Jumblatt, who wanted to pursue the civil war to his own conclusion, without external involvement.

CABINET MEETING

At a cabinet meeting attended by President Franjieh, a process was agreed for the election of a new president and approval was given for an amnesty for rebel soldiers. Jumblatt once again called for the immediate resignation of Franjieh. Just previously (the 19th) Prime Minister Karami had escaped an assassination attempt at Beirut airport when a rocket was fired at the plane in which he was sitting, waiting to take off for Damascus: the LAA was the prime suspect.

Towards the end of March there was a resumption of fighting across Lebanon. Jumblatt's NDM militias made considerable advances towards the mountainous areas of southern Lebanon, where Druse and Christians were pitched against each other. Protracted fighting raged around the Christian village of Kahale, and also around Aley, the Druse stronghold south-east of Beirut.

In Beirut on the 23rd the Mourabitoun captured the Holiday Inn from the Falangists, which meant that NDM militias now dominated most of the strategic points around central Beirut. The Lebanese government appealed to Arab states to send fire-fighting ships to the port of Beirut to deal with huge fires that were burning out of control and threatening vital stocks of food and other supplies.

CHRISTIAN MILITIAS

As the NDM's pressure on Christian positions increased, Pierre Gemayel became the dominant commander of the Christian 'Unified Command'. Gemayel issued an appeal to his supporters to rally to the defence of Christian areas: the feeling of panic in some parts had reached such a pitch that people were fleeing the country to avoid the devastation of war. On 26 March the local press reported that 18 000 young men had reported to the Falange Party's recruiting offices, but also mentioned that thousands of Christians were fleeing by sea to Cyprus. As a conciliatory gesture to the Arab nations, Gemayel said he would be willing to discuss certain reforms to save Lebanon from partition.

WESTERN INTERVENTION

In the United Nations, Secretary General Kurt Waldheim asked for a special Security Council meeting to be covened to discuss the Lebanese situation. Lebanese Christian leaders had been urging this for some time, but the Muslim states were not in favour and Egypt still wanted the Arab League to deal with the problem. Karami too rejected the suggestion. Talk of partition alarmed the Western powers, as did the fact that there were some 300 000 Palestinians in Lebanon, which had a nominal population of only 2.5 million (UN estimates).

Dean Brown, US President Ford's special envoy, visited Beirut on 31 March, just after the US State Department had announced that seven ships of the US 6th Fleet were patrolling within 20 hours' sailing distance of Lebanon, ready to evacuate the estimated 1000 Americans in that country. At a joint press conference Arafat and George Habash, leader of the PFLP, temporary friends at that moment, dramatically threatened to sink any US warship that entered Lebanese waters.

SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION

In response to Syria's threat to ban all further arms supplies to the NDM militias, Jumblatt agreed to another ceasefire. It would come into effect on 2 April 1976 for a trial period of ten days, during which time President Franjieh should resign, a new head of state would be elected and political reforms would be instituted in Lebanon. The ceasefire was to be policed on the Muslim side by Arafat's PASC and Brigadier Ahdab's garrison troops. However the ceasefire was not properly monitored, and there were widespread clashes and continual waves of kidnapping as individual militias and factions seized hostages for exchange and insurance purposes. There was also a spate of major robberies, as groups tried to accumulate funds.

On 4 April Brigadier Ahdab accused General Hanna Saed of supplying weapons and ammunition to Christian militias, and of making plans to move the Defence Ministry HQ from Yarzeh, near Baabda, to Junieh as a further step towards partition. Saed rejected the allegations, but this was the final rift between the two commanders. On the 6th a Syrian torpedo boat fired on a British freighter that was trying to enter Tripoli harbour.

On 9 April, for the first time Syrian regular armed forces intervened in Lebanon directly. Syrian armoured units occupied the Lebanese border post at Masnaa (three miles inside Lebanon) on the Beirut–Damascus highway, pushing aside troops of the LAA. In the ensuing days they took over other Lebanese frontier posts on the eastern and northern border, effectively sealing off the country and severing the land supply lines to militias inside Lebanon. The National Democratic Movement agreed to extend the ten-day ceasefire until the end of the month, but a general strike in Sidon and Tyre by anti-Syrian elements, reignited the hostilities.

The Syrian regular troops at the Lebanese border posts began to advance towards Beirut, but they halted on the 13th as Prime Minister Karami and Arafat had jointly persuaded President Assad to delay the advance. However most of the Christian militias, and indeed much of the civilian population, wanted Syria to come in to stop the

intercommunal fighting. None the less Jumblatt condemned the Syrian action as a 'blatant military invasion cooked up with American connivance', and appealed to the Arab League to force the Syrian military units to withdraw. Thus the Christian militias were now siding with the Syrians against Muslim NDM militias and Palestinian groups.

Israel was also deeply concerned by the appearance of regular Syrian troops in Lebanon, and on the 21st the Israeli government stated that while its policy was generally one of non-intervention in Lebanon, there was a bottom-line proviso: it regarded the Litani River in southern Lebanon as a 'red line' (from Zahrani on the coast eastwards to the foothills of Mount Lebanon), and any Syrian military advance south of the red line would be regarded as a security threat to Israel. Israel estimated that the strength of foreign troops in Lebanon was 3–4000 Syrian regulars, 3500 armed Palestinians and 7000 Saiqa.

At a meeting in Damascus on 16 April, attended by Arafat, who also represented Jumblatt and his NDM leaders, President Assad produced a seven-point peace plan. The plan included the revival of the Higher Military Committee, but rejected partition, the internationalisation of Lebanon and US interference. The Higher Military Committee was expanded to 15 members to include the Falange Party and certain NDM members. The committee, chaired by Prime Minister Karami, met in Beirut but seemed unable to solve any problems.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Meanwhile, on 11 April 1976 the Chamber of Deputies had met at Villa Esseily in Beirut to approve the necessary constitutional amendments to allow for the early election of a new president. Two days earlier the deputies had voted to postpone the general election, due in April, for up to 26 months. President Franjieh delayed signing the amendment, and so on the 22nd the NDM threatened to establish a 'revolutionary government' and a non-sectarian assembly of 300 members if a new president was not elected within 10 days. Franjieh signed on the 24th.

Heavy fighting across the country delayed the reconvening of the Chamber of Deputies for some days, and it was not until a new ceasefire came into effect in early May that proceedings began and the election date was set for 8 May. There were only two candidates – Elias Sarkis and Raymond Edde (Sarkis was governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon and had opposed Franjieh in the 1970 presidential election). On the first ballot Sarkis obtained 63 votes out of 99, three short of victory, but on the second ballot he obtained a clear-cut majority as Edde's supporters boycotted the session.

In his acceptance speech Sarkis urged all Lebanese to stop fighting, promising reconstruction and cooperation with both Palestinians and the Arab states. All were expecting Franjieh to step down immediately and allow Sarkis to assume the presidency, but Franjieh did nothing of the sort – he clung on to office, although devoid of any real power.

A CHRISTIAN STATE

Syrian military movement into the Bekaa Valley had begun in early April by systematically consolidating positions already held by Syrian-sponsored Palestinian groups and Saiqa units. This brought some of the NDM militias into conflict with the invaders, and so pressure on the Christian militias was eased. This drastic change of events, even though the Christians were cooperating with the Syrians for basic survival reasons, caused some Christian leaders to announce they were forming a separate Christian state, encompassing the Christian-inhabited contiguous area north of Beirut and embracing postal services, customs and income tax. In response the Druse leader, Kamal Jumblatt, threatened to establish a Druse state in the Chouf area. Both these proposals were controversial.

Intercommunal fighting rumbled on, and in mid May it was particularly intense in the Tripoli area, where Palestinian and Saiqa units clashed with Jumblatt's NDM militias, while in the south Lieutenant Khataib's rebel Lebanese Arab Army roamed like a loose cannon.

Assassination was not uncommon: for example, two separate

attacks were made near Jubail against Raymond Edde, leader of the National Bloc. Unidentified gunmen also attacked the Beirut home of the Jumblatt family, killing Jumblatt's sister and her daughter.

THE SYRIANS ADVANCE

After a short lull, fighting escalated at the end of May and continued throughout June, especially in northern Lebanon and in and around Beirut, where surface-to-air missiles were used for the first time in this conflict. Beirut airport came under heavy Falange mortar bombardment, which led to another major Syrian regular army detachment, with tanks and artillery, crossing into Lebanon and advancing towards Beirut and other major towns. This time the Syrian advance encountered strong resistance from the NDM militias.

The Syrian military had actually been invited in to Lebanon by the Christian inhabitants of Koubayat and Andakil, whose some 30 000 inhabitants were being threatened by the LAA, now affiliated with the NDM. The Syrian advance succeeded in relieving pressure on these villages, pushing back the LAA and NDM militias and occupying positions on the northern side of the Beirut–Damascus highway. Part of the Syrian objective had been to establish a secure road link between the Christian hinterland north of Beirut and the Christian town of Zahle, still besieged by Tripoli-based Muslim militias, and thence into Syria. The invading Syrians also blockaded Muslim areas in West Beirut.

JOINT MILITARY COMMAND

On 4 June 1976 Jumblatt organised a Joint General Command, dominated by his NDM militias, including the new Lebanese Arab Army, and managed to prevent the Syrians from gaining complete control of all the key positions north of the Beirut–Damascus highway.

In the south the Syrian forces were halted outside Sidon, suffering losses in men and tanks, while in the east they occupied most of the Bekaa Valley, from where Lebanese

air force planes from the Reyak air base flew with Syrian modern MiG-21s over Lebanon. The Lebanese air force was predominantly Christian. In mid June the Syrians set about reorganising the shattered Lebanese army by reforming certain elements as the 'Vanguards of the Lebanese Army', in the hope of attracting both Muslim and Christian officers and soldiers.

Both Jumblatt and Edde accused Syria of conspiring with the United States to annex parts of Lebanon, the underlying purpose being to relieve pressure on Israel and pave the way for a Middle East peace settlement. On the other hand Camille Chamoun and Pierre Gemayel welcomed the Syrian invasion, and belatedly so did President Franjieh. However the younger Christian leaders were not so sure, particularly Bashir Gemayel, who opposed it on the ground that it would prevent a settlement being reached among the Lebanese factions themselves: that is, the 'Lebanese Solution'. Bashir Gemayel, commanding the Falange Party militia, met Kamal Jumblatt on 1 June in Beirut – their first meeting for over a year – to discuss this issue.

THE CONFRONTATION LINE

The current ceasefire was broken on 22 June when the combined NLP and Falangist militias launched an offensive against the Tel Zaatar and Jish el-Pasha Palestinian refugee camps just to the south-east of Beirut. In the following days the attack escalated into a full-scale battle along what had become the 35-mile 'confrontation line' through and around Beirut, separating the two sides from each other. On the 27th Falange shells destroyed a stationary Middle East Airlines airliner at the airport, killing several people.

On the 16th Francis Meloy, US ambassador to Lebanon, had been shot dead while crossing the 'confrontation line' in an embassy car to meet President Franjieh. Henry Kissinger, US secretary of state, said that a Palestinian terrorist splinter group, trying to prevent moderation, was responsible. Arafat arrested eight individuals in connection with this plot, offering to hand them over to the Arab League, but little seemed to happen. The United States wanted to

take custody of the detainees, but no one was prepared to go that far.

All US nationals were advised to leave Lebanon immediately, and many did so in vehicles along the highway to Damascus, but this route soon became unsafe and nearly 300 US and other foreign nationals were escorted under PLO protection to Beirut beach, where they were picked up by naval launches and taken to Greece. Another 300 or so were evacuated by sea on 27 July, including the US diplomatic staff, the US embassy in Beirut having been closed. A few US citizens remained in Lebanon, most of whom had dual nationality.

BATTLE OF THE CAMPS

Alleging that the Tel Zaatar and the adjacent Jish el-Pasha refugee camps near Beirut had ceased to house Palestinian refugees and had become fortified bases, the Christian militias decided to capture them. Shelling began in late June. The Jish el-Pasha camp had originally held about 6000 refugees, said to be predominantly Christian, but the attackers alleged that all civilians had fled to the Tel Zaatar camp as soon as the shelling began, although as the days passed Palestinian spokesmen complained that 'hundreds of women and children were blasted to death in air raid shelters' (Radio Lebanon). The Jish al-Pasha camp was eventually overrun by Christian militiamen on 30 June, who stated that most of the '200 guerrilla defenders' had escaped to Tel Zaatar when the final attack was launched.

Christian militias continued to shell the larger Tel Zaatar camp, which originally housed about 5000 Palestinian refugees, most of whom, according to Christian sources, fled when the attacks began, leaving the camp to be defended by about 1000 armed Palestinian militiamen. In response to the 'siege of the camps', Palestinian and NDM militias launched other attacks on Christian and Syrian positions across the country during late June and throughout July. Junieh, which had become the unofficial capital of the Christians, was repeatedly shelled.

CHRISTIAN AND DRUSE TERRITORIES

The lifting of the siege of Zahle in early June, mainly due to the approach of Syrian forces, had eased Christian apprehension that any aggressive action by them might provoke an all-out NDM assault on this Christian-inhabited town, which had withstood a Muslim siege for several weeks. During the first part of July, NDM militias mounted offensives against Zghorta, Chekka and other Christian towns in the northern area that were defended by the Zghorta Liberation Army. With some Syrian artillery support the offensives were repelled. Due to the Christian–Syrian military cooperation in this region, the tide began to turn and the battle moved to Tripoli, a mainly Muslim stronghold. The battle involved Syrian combat aircraft, tanks and guns, and three days of costly fighting ended in a stand-off on 10 July. The reported death toll was 3866, quoted as the highest for any three-day period since the civil war began (Radio Damascus).

To halt the further development of the Christian enclave that was growing up in the Junieh area, on 22 July Jumblatt announced the creation of the Central Political Council, composed of leaders of his NDM coalition parties. The council would govern a much larger area than that of the Christian enclave, and would have full responsibility for all security, defence, financial and foreign affairs. This was seen as a step towards the political fragmentation of Lebanon, and was opposed by traditional Sunni Muslim leaders such as Prime Minister Karami, who wanted the republic to remain intact.

ARAB PEACEKEEPING FORCE

At an emergency meeting of the Arab League in Cairo it was agreed that the Syrian invasion army should be cloaked as a symbolic 'Arab peacekeeping' one. The troops would remain in Lebanon at least until a new president was elected, but they should be withdrawn from sensitive areas around Beirut. By mid July this Arab League project was beginning to take form, an Egyptian General (Mohammed Hassan

Ghoneim) having arrived Lebanon to take command of an estimated 2500 men, a large percentage of whom were Syrian regular soldiers. On the 21st, elements of this peacekeeping body took up positions along the confrontation line – three of the men were killed by sniper fire the following day.

DAMASCUS CONFERENCE

A long drawn out conference began in Damascus on 22 July, attended by several high-level leaders or their representatives. Most of the factions involved in the on-going struggle in Lebanon were represented, as were some of their backers, the main object being to achieve a durable ceasefire. Two key absentees were Pierre Gemayel, who said there could be no meaningful negotiations until the Palestinians were disarmed, and Kamal Jumblatt, who insisted that the negotiations could not begin until all Syrian troops had left Lebanon.

The Falangists gave conditional support to a ceasefire, but there was Christian factional disagreement over a proposed Christian withdrawal from certain key points. The NLP militia insisted that withdrawal decisions should only apply to Palestinian and Lebanese Muslim militias. Chamoun flatly refused to accept a ceasefire that was nominally declared on the 29th, the day the conference ended. In the last two days of the month there were clashes between two Christian groups – the Falange Party militia and the NLP – over possession of territory and the struggle for prestige.

THE FALL OF TEL ZAATAR CAMP

Meanwhile the NLP militia continued its siege of the Tel Zaatar camp. It also mounted an offensive against the neighbouring district of Nabaa, probable mustering about 6000 armed men. Several ceasefires were negotiated, but they were of brief duration. One was broken on 24 July as the Christian bombardment had caused the collapse of an underground shelter in the camp, a disaster in which up

to 300 people perished. The Palestinian defence remained resolute, and all attempts by the Red Cross to evacuate the wounded were unsuccessful.

The NLP militias refused to accept the ceasefire negotiated in Damascus on 29 July, and continued to press home attacks. Despite this, during 3–4 August the Red Cross managed to evacuate some 400 wounded Palestinians, and on the 6th, the day that Nabaa fell, more wounded were evacuated. The Tel Zaatar refugee camp was eventually overrun on 12 August. Later the Christian attackers insisted that most of the defenders had escaped safely, but two Palestinian doctors who had worked in the camp throughout the siege stated that '1600 people were killed by shell fire in the last few days, and over 4000 were injured' (Radio Lebanon). It can not be disputed that Christian militiamen carried out a number of summary executions as they overran the camp, which explains why no prisoners were taken.

After the fall of the Dabayeh Palestinian refugee camp in January, that of Jish el-Pasha in June and now Tel Zaatar in August, 13 UNRWA-run Palestinian refugee camps remained in Lebanon, housing about 80 000 refugees. Two camps in the Bekaa Valley and two near Tripoli were besieged by Syrian armed forces (UNRWA report).

On 9 August, after the sinking of a Greek Cypriot cargo ship by saboteurs in Tyre harbour, Greek shipowners had announced there would be no more runs to either Tyre or Sidon.

SYRIAN AND CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVES

Joint Syrian–Christian offensives were launched in several parts of Lebanon during August to force the NDM and Palestinian militias into certain defined areas, and to block their respective lines of supply and communication, Syria again closed its border with Lebanon to sever the Palestinian supply line. In response, Arafat decreed general conscription for all male Palestinians in Lebanon between the ages of 18 and 30 years, but it was more of a sabre-rattling gesture than an effective policy.

Detachments of the Syrian regular forces, as well as some from Arab contributors to the Arab peacekeeping force, were deployed in southern Lebanon. In addition the Syrian-sponsored Vanguards of the Lebanese Army, relics of the old Lebanese army, were deployed around the southern town of Nabatiyeh.

There was a slight reduction in the intensity of the fighting during September, the centre of hostilities moving to the Chouf mountain area, where NDM militias were firmly ensconced and refusing to budge from positions they had held since early the previous year. Two brief ceasefires were effected to enable local negotiations to be held, one on the 11th in the town of Sofa (east of Beirut), the other a week later in Chtaura. Neither of the negotiations bore fruit. In a two-day operation towards the end of the month (28–29 September) Syrian regular forces captured a string of villages to the east of Beirut, including Ain Tura, a strategic road-junction village, with one road branching off northwards to Junieh.

PRESIDENT SARKIS INAUGURATED

On 23 September 1976 Elias Sarkis was inaugurated as president of Lebanon, thus ending a power void, although Sulieman Franjieh had technically held on to the title right until the last moment. The inauguration took place in Chtaura, where a special session of the Chamber of Deputies was convened. Some 67 deputies attended, the absentees being mainly Muslims. The following day President Sarkis moved into the presidential palace in Baabda.

Still acting in conjunction with Christian militias, the Syrians continued their 'cleansing' campaign against Palestinian and NDM militias during October, especially against positions in the mountains east of Beirut. They also mounted a similar offensive in the Sidon area, compressing Palestinian militias into a small sector of the city and establishing a complete blockade of Palestinian supplies coming in by sea to the port of Sidon.

THE RIYADH PEACE AGREEMENT

Representatives of the various Lebanese factions and others deeply interested in the civil war met in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in mid October 1976, and on the 18th a partial peace plan was outlined for Lebanon. The conference dealt only with the Palestinian conflict with the Lebanese government and certain security aspects of the civil war, carefully avoiding any reference to differences between Christian parties and militias. President Sarkis insisted that this issue could be dealt with later, after basic peace had settled on his country.

The main purpose of the conference was to forge a lasting ceasefire from the 21st, which was quoted as being the '56th since April 1975' (Radio Lebanon). It was agreed that the Cairo Agreement of 1969 should obtain, meaning that the Palestinian militias could remain in Lebanon, but that all combatants should withdraw to the positions they had held prior to April 1975. The other main item was the formal creation of a 30 000-strong Arab Deterrent Force (ADF), under the control of President Sarkis, which was already in shadowy gestation. Syria was accorded the predominant role in the ADF, which was to be a peacekeeping body. An Arab League summit in Cairo on 25–26 October endorsed the so-called Riyadh Peace Agreement by a large majority.

The agreement contained a secret clause between Syria and the PLO to the effect that the 'Arafat Trail', the illicit supply route from Syria into southern Lebanon, would be reopened by Syrian troops to allow Palestinian units to move south to counter growing Israeli influence in the border area.

SYRIAN MILITARY TAKEOVER

During November 1976 Syrian armed forces, in the guise of the Arab Deterrent Force, authorised by the Arab League, progressively occupied key Lebanese cities and brought the first phase of the civil war to an end. On the 9th a Syrian armoured unit occupied Aley, Jumblatt's main Druse base.

It encountered no opposition, and in the ensuing days Syrian troops moved into Christian, NDM and Palestinian strongholds to the north and south of Beirut, there being only negligible opposition from small extremist groups. On the 15th Syrian troops moved into the centre of Beirut, and occupied positions along the confrontation line between Christian and Muslim areas, again without resistance. On the 21st Syrian armed forces occupied Tripoli and Sidon, and advanced southwards to the oil refinery near the Litani River, Israel's self-declared 'red line'. The Syrian military occupation of Lebanon had been smoothly and almost peacefully completed. Everyone seemed astounded, stunned and momentarily inactive.

President Sarkis made a speech on the 21st, pledging that Lebanon would remain a democratic country and that he would appoint commissions to reactivate ministries and government departments. There seemed to be just one major Christian protesting voice, that of Raymond Edde, leader of the National Bloc, who publicly criticised the Riyadh peace agreement and opposed the Syrian military occupation of Lebanon, alleging that the underlying objective was to partition the country. Edde survived yet another assassination attempt on the 11th, the suspicion falling on Syrian government agents.

THE HOSS CABINET

On 9 December Selim Hoss was appointed prime minister. He formed an eight-member technocrat cabinet, the members having no pronounced political affiliations or previous ministerial experience. Hoss, a US-educated Sunni Muslim, was a professor of economics and a banker.

4 Assassination and Invasion: 1977–78

According to some accounts the Third Lebanese Civil War, in which 20 000 or more were killed, ended with the Riyadh Peace Agreement, the ceasefire of 21 October 1976 and the cessation of fighting in November, but in reality it continued with severe complications as reaction set in. On 1 January 1977 press censorship was introduced. It took effect on the 3rd, was extended to foreign correspondents on the 5th and modified on the 25th. Several Lebanese periodicals were suspended as the restrictions were defied or evaded. Attempts were made to resurrect the economy, and on the 17th Lebanese banks began to reopen, some having been closed for up to ten months.

One of the conditions of the agreement was that the various factions in Lebanon should hand over their heavy weapons – including tanks, armoured vehicles, anti-aircraft guns and heavy artillery – for storage in depots under the surveillance of the ADF. The deadline was set for 5 December 1976, after which they would be collected by force. However little happened as various objections were raised. The militias of the Christian Lebanese Front insisted that the ruling must first apply to the Palestinian and NDM units, but they refused to hand over their heavy weapons until the Christian militias had done so, on the ground that they needed them to defend their camps against possible Israeli aggression, especially in the southern border areas.

The Higher Defence Committee, chaired by President Sarkis, met on 7 January and decided to extend the deadline to the 12th, and that regular Palestinian units should leave Lebanon by that date. A few heavy weapons were surrendered on the 13th, but collection was a slow operation.

Meanwhile there was rising confrontational friction between Christians and Muslims in Beirut and other major cities. For example on 3 January a huge car-bomb explosion

had occurred in the Christian Ashrafiyeh district of East Beirut, close to the HQ of the Falangist security service, which probably killed over 40 people and injured another 50 or so, after which Beirut was paralysed by a strike that caused all traffic between West and East Beirut to come to a halt while reprisals were extracted. Censorship blanketed out much of this and similar incidents. One foreign source (*Le Monde*) reported that more than 100 Muslims were killed on the streets of East Beirut on the 4th, and more casualties were caused by retaliatory explosions and shootings. There was also a spate of hostage taking, about which little was heard in detail.

THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUMBLATT

On 16 March 1977 Kamal Jumblatt, the Druse leader of the National Democratic Movement, was ambushed and killed in his car near the village of Baklin in the Chouf mountains by unidentified gunmen. A bodyguard and the driver also died. Since the Riyadh agreement, Jumblatt had opposed the Syrian military presence in Lebanon, and had largely withdrawn to Muktara, his home town in the Chouf where he was working to establish an autonomous administration. In January he had been reelected chairman of the Progressive Socialist Party and confirmed as leader of the NDM. Earlier (4 December 1976) he had escaped assassination, when a bomb in a car parked near his home exploded, killing several people and injuring others. Jumblatt blamed Saiqa for that incident. The Druse extracted retribution on their traditional enemies, the Christians, who lived in intermixed villages. Despite the hasty dispatch of a large body of ADF Syrian troops to keep the peace in the Chouf, over 100 Christians were killed in reprisal actions.

Jumblatt's son, Walid, succeeded him as Druse leader, and on 1 May was elected leader of the PSP. Later (12 September), Walid Jumblatt, with the agreement of the Lebanese Baath Party, reorganised the National Democratic Movement and opened it up to all who accepted its objectives, which were to abolish the confessional state, safeguard the unity of Lebanon, create a Lebanese army capable

of participating in the struggle against Israel, ensure co-operation between Lebanon and Syria, and apply the Lebanese–Palestinian agreements.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LEBANESE ARMY

On 28 March 1977 President Sarkis appointed Brigadier Victor Khoury to be the new army commander, an appointment that was strongly opposed by two ex-presidents, Chamoun and Franjieh. The supporters of the latter instigated a protest strike in East Beirut in support of the rentention of Hanna Saed, but owing to lack of Falangist support the strike had to be called off on the 30th. Sarkis wanted to reorganise the army, which had split into four sectarian factions, and was supported in this project by Syria, but his efforts were thwarted. Reorganisation was to commence in May and was scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. Christian leaders were reluctant to relinquish control of their militias, and while the Muslims put a few troops at the disposal of the government, they still withheld their large irregular armed forces.

The main Christian objection was that army reorganisation would disrupt their own decentralisation plans, which involved autonomous regions each with their own army and police force, and so insisted that, before they would cooperate, the Palestinians must first be disarmed and the 1969 Cairo agreement further restricted. They also insisted that in the new army all former Maronite officers should be guaranteed their former rank, but that this should not apply to Muslim officers. Earlier in the year Sarkis had asked all Maronite officers to resign so that he could decide which should be retained. The response to this was slow, and by mid May less than one fifth had resigned.

PARTITION

The Lebanese Front, still based mainly on the Falange and the National Liberal Parties, was now pressing for 'political decentralisation', that is, dividing the country into defined

Christian and Muslim areas in order to 'eliminate friction', although the two parties were not in full agreement over the precise delineation of the regions. They had cooperated so far in establishing a certain degree of autonomy in their own hinterland, north of Beirut, based on Junieh, and indeed had begun to construct their own airport at Halat, north of Beirut. The NDM strongly objected to this form of partition, and on 7 July produced a seven-point plan opposing political decentralisation, alleging it was simply an attempt to divest Lebanon of its Arab character.

THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

The two main problems facing the Lebanese government were the Palestinians in Lebanon and their involvement on the unstable southern front. As soon as fighting had slackened off in central Lebanon at the end of 1976, Palestinians began to return to the Arkoub area. They were based mainly in Hasbaya, ostensibly allocated to them under the 1969 Cairo agreement. Aggressive action was resumed against scattered Christian and Muslim Shia habitations, and also against Israel. Both the Lebanese Front and Israel objected to Palestinian guerrillas massing in this area. The Lebanese Front's demands reached beyond the 1969 Cairo agreement, insisting that Palestinians should be restricted to refugee camps, and also that their designated area should be sharply reduced in size. Israel threatened to intervene if Palestinians were permitted to increase their strength on the Israeli border.

The southern part of Lebanon was mainly inhabited by Shia Muslims, the largest sect in the country and probably numbering 900 000 (UN estimate) at that time. They were generally thought of as the 'poor, depressed and disregarded', and lived mainly in tiny villages, often interspersed with villages housing other sects. In 1957 Imam Musa Sadr, an Iranian and long-time colleague of Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, had been sent from Iran to organise and rouse the Shia of southern Lebanon into political activity. In 1967 he had formed the Shia Higher Communal Council, and during the civil war had set up a political organisation called

Amal (Hope), which was now developing its own militia. The Shias had previously been regarded as an insignificant military factor in Lebanon, and those who joined or were conscripted into the militias were regarded as individuals, and not as representatives of their sect. Now, however, the Amal militia was beginning to pitch itself against Palestinian militias.

ISRAEL'S 'OPEN FENCE' POLICY

Israel had constructed a strong security fence along Lebanon's south-eastern and southern frontier, being technically still in a state of war with that country. In southern Lebanon there were three Christian majority areas on the Lebanese–Israeli frontier: the largest lay to the north, extending southwards from Marjayoun in a widening triangle; the second was just south of Bint Jabail; and the third, smaller one, was located in the south-western corner. For some time Israel had been trying to improve its relations with Lebanese Christians providing them with covert assistance and a certain amount of military aid.

From early 1976 the Israeli government implemented an 'open fence' policy, whereby a frontier gate was opened to each of the three Christian enclaves and Lebanese villagers, both Christian and Shia, were allowed into Israel in order to receive medical treatment, to work (Israel being short of manual labourers) and to buy food and supplies. In addition certain Maronite villages were provided with water and even electricity. Israel also constructed roads to the three frontier gates, which caused the Lebanese government and the Palestinians to have qualms about Israel's strategic intentions.

CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVE

During February 1977 Lebanese Front militias began a campaign to eject NDM militias from a number of frontier villages they had reoccupied, and to press Palestinian militias back into the Arkoub, with the help of Israeli supporting

fire. The NDM-held villages of Kfar and Tibnit were bombarded by Israeli artillery fire (from Israeli territory) on the 16th. Nabatiyeh was bombarded on the 17th, as were other villages in the vicinity.

Khiam, which had been held by the so-called Lebanese Arab Army, was seized by Christian militias on their way to the Arkoub region, and in another thrust further south they also captured Bint Jabail on the 26th. The Palestinian militias denied the loss of Bint Jabail, but sent reinforcements from the Sidon and Tyre areas to lend support to the units being subjected to Lebanese Front and Israeli pressure. The fighting died down in early March, when President Sarkis wanted to send the ADF southwards to police that troubled border area, but Syria would not agree as it did not want to risk direct confrontation with Israel. A small detachment of Lebanese police, said to be the advance guard of an eventual 2000, was sent to Hasbaya, but little more was heard of them.

Further hostilities broke out on the 23rd between Lebanese Front militias based in the Christian village of Koleya and Muslim ones in Hasbaya. The exchanges mainly consisted of artillery fire, again with Israeli involvement. On the 30th Lebanese Front militias launched a double-pronged assault on Bint Jabail and Taibe (about three miles from the Israeli border), gaining control of the latter. Israel confirmed that it had used artillery to support the Christian assault on Taibe, after shells had landed on Israeli kibbutzim (IDF press release).

PALESTINIAN OFFENSIVE

After these setbacks, Palestinian militia reinforcements were sent south in late March and early April to launch a counteroffensive. This was designed to break through the 'security belt' of Christian-held villages that protected Israel from cross-border raids. Palestinian fighters, backed by Syrian forces, launched an attack against Taibe on 4 April 1977, while Syrian guns began to bombard Christian positions in Koleya, Khiam and Marjayoun, which was countered by Israeli artillery support. The Christians lost

control of Khiam on the 7th, and although ground activity became static again, the artillery duels continued for a few more days.

These events represented a departure from Syria's usual policy of backing the Christian Lebanese Front and seeking to keep the Palestinians on a tight rein. Also, for the first time Saiqa units from Sidon had joined the battle on the side of the Palestinians. The sudden change of Syrian policy alarmed not only the Lebanese government but also Chamoun and Gemayel, the leaders of the Lebanese Front. Protests were made to President Assad of Syria, who explained that he had just wanted to freeze the situation in the border area, but thereafter Syrian artillery began to play a reduced role.

In Israel, Menachem Begin and his Likud Party came to power on 17 May. Begin's foreign policy was more aggressive than that of his predecessor, which aroused fear that he might launch preemptive attacks on Arab states, probably commencing with southern Lebanon. Palestinian militias, with Syria's blessing, sent further reinforcements to the southern border areas, where Israeli artillery continued spasmodically to shell Palestinian bases and positions from across the frontier. Later, on 8 August, Prime Minister Begin publicly referred to Israeli aid to the Maronites in Lebanon. He admitted that Israel had been providing supplies, artillery and military training to the Christian militias, and affirmed that it was Israel's duty to block any acts of genocide by Palestinian forces in Lebanon. He vowed that Israel would never abandon the Christian minority across the border, adding that the Christian population of Lebanon would have been totally wiped out many months ago if Israel had not intervened, a statement that contained elements of unpleasant truth.

The next major clash occurred on 17 May between Palestinians and Shia Muslim militias in the village of Yarine (about one mile from the Israeli border), in which Israeli artillery joined in. This was one of Amal's first actions against Palestinians. Further actions of a similar nature occurred, but after more fighting around Yarine between Palestinians and Shias, and in the Marjayoun and Khiam areas on 19 July, the Palestinians agreed to stop fighting in the south.

TALKS IN CHTAURA

Anxious not to provoke Israel, and to calm the situation on the southern Lebanese border, the Syrians invited various leaders to talks at the crossroads town of Chtaura in Lebanon on 20 July 1977, the main item on the agenda being how to control the Palestinians. A second meeting was held in Chtaura on the 25th, at which Arafat agreed to a staged Palestinian withdrawal to 15 miles from the Israeli frontier. The PASC was to supervise this operation, but Lebanese Front militias soon complained that this was not being implemented. Further meetings took place in Chtaura, all with vague conclusions. Meanwhile, spasmodic hostilities continued as before along the southern border. Palestinians shelled the Israeli border access point at Metulla in Israel, which caused its closure, but those at Dovev and Hanita remained open.

TROUBLE IN TRIPOLI

Meanwhile there had been spates of dissident activity in other parts of Lebanon. For example, during May there had been several clashes between Christian militias and Syrian ADF troops in an area just south-east of Tripoli, where on 14 May two Syrian soldiers had been killed in ambush. The ADF had demanded that the culprits be handed over to them, which was refused. The Syrian troops had been reinforced, and on the 18th they had forcibly entered Christian villages (Ahbine, Bellah and Bir Halioune), where arrests had been made and weapons seized. Bellah had been besieged for some days and over 20 Syrian soldiers died before the tension subsided.

TROUBLE IN THE CHOUF

Periodic clashes between Christians and Druse took place in the Chouf area. One such occurred on 21 August in the mixed village of Brieh, where a confrontation broke out around a church on the day before the Lebanese Front

congress was due to meet. ADF units intervened to keep the peace, and fired shells into the village to break up the fighting. It is probable that up to 20 people were killed and others injured, and it was alleged that several Christian women were among the casualties. Brieh was quiet the following day, but there were minor repercussions in adjacent villages.

When asked about this incident the Lebanese minister of the interior, Salah Salman (a Druse), denied that there had been any trouble in Brieh, a reminder that press censorship was still in force and that he was obviously suppressing unpalatable news. However the Lebanese Front spoke out, threatening further violence if the government did not condemn the killings and insisting that the ADF culprits be punished.

Friction continued in the Beirut area, not only between Muslims and Christians, but also between Amal, the Shia militia and Palestinians. In one incident on 22 April, two Syrian ADF soldiers were killed in the Shia district of the capital, and in the subsequent shootout over 50 casualties were incurred. On the 24th, Syrian troops reentered the area by force and arrested four Shia murder suspects, who reportedly were executed the following day in Damascus.

PALESTINIAN INTERFACTIONAL FIGHTING

To avoid any impression being gained that the various Palestinian militias were a solid block under Arafat's leadership and PASC discipline, it should be emphasised that this was far from the case. The Palestinian groups broadly remained in two separate coalitions that were hostile to each other: those who supported Arafat and his search for a peaceful solution, and those insisting that Palestinian independence could only be won by the armed struggle. The two sides strove with each other for converts, prestige, territory and domination, especially within the refugee camps. Also in this period, certain extremist Palestinian groups were waging a grand strategic war of international terrorism in pursuit of their political goals, and many of their exploits were planned in or operated from Lebanon.

Clashes within the refugee camps continued spasmodically, some violent and bloody, but the combatants were left to their own devices as far as possible, the ADF only occasionally intervening. The Chtaura talks produced guidelines on how the Palestinian militias should be controlled, but these were mostly ignored as the Palestinians pushed their luck to the hilt.

US-BROKERED CEASEFIRE

The United States now came more fully into the act. The American ambassador, Richard Parker, managed to broker a ceasefire in Lebanon, as from 26 September 1977, under which units of the new Lebanese army would be sent southwards in October to take over from the Palestinian militias. There was doubt about the capability of the new Lebanese national army, which was said to be about 6000-strong, but up to one third were still in training. The strength of the Palestinian militias, on the other hand, had probably increased from 6000 to 10 000 during the previous two years.

The projected reorganisation of the Lebanese army had not gone well, and despite recruitment drives few had been attracted. This was largely due to antipathy between factions and dislike of the neutralist stigma attached to military service. The government had been forced to organise the new army into separate denominational sections – neutralism was rare and unpopular in Lebanon.

THE THIRD STAGE

The sticking point of the Chtaura talks was what came to be known as the 'third stage', that is, the withdrawal of the Palestinian militias from the southern border and their replacement by detachments of the new Lebanese army. This should have commenced in August 1977 but was repeatedly postponed. However at the beginning of October elements of the new Lebanese army did take over positions in Tyre, Nabatiyeh and Tibnin that were held by remnants of the breakaway Lebanese Arab Army, being largely a reorganisational compromise.

After further negotiations in October, it was agreed that the 'third stage' would commence on 1 November and proceed for nine days, but this was delayed as the Palestinians again hardened their attitude and refused to withdraw unless the Christian militias withdrew at the same time. This was further complicated by the Lebanese Front suddenly insisting that the Palestinians should withdraw on a much wider scale than envisaged by the Chtaura talks, and that any settlement in the south-east must include Israel being allowed to retain its 'open fence' access points. The Lebanese government was believed to be in favour of the 'third stage' but was reluctant to enforce it as Syria, the military occupier of the country, was opposed to any Palestinian withdrawal from the south, although it did urge the Palestinians not to provoke further border hostilities.

Arafat flatly stated that there would be no Palestinian withdrawal from southern Lebanon. He rejected all Israeli demands and alleged that Israel was continuing to occupy six important positions in southern Lebanon by proxy, as it was supporting an independent 'militia' commanded by Major Saad Haddad.

Throwing caution to the wind, on 6 November the Palestinians fired Katyusha rockets from Lebanese territory at the northern Israeli coastal town of Nahariyah, causing Ezer Weizmann, the Israeli defence minister, to threaten to settle accounts. More rocket attacks were made against Israeli targets on the 8th. This time Israel replied with artillery fire, while Israeli gunboats shelled positions near Tyre, and near the Rashidiyah, al-Bass and Bourj al-Shemali refugee camps.

In November President Carter agreed to act as mediator for a more permanent ceasefire in Lebanon, but hostilities tailed off anyway during the harsh winter month of December. The lull in the south was broken on 22 January 1978 by heavy exchanges of artillery fire in Nabatiyeh and the Christian-held towns of Marjayoun and Koleya. Blatu (eight miles from the Israeli border) changed hands twice but remained under Palestinian control. Israel claimed that, contrary to agreements, the Palestinians were receiving arms through the part of Tyre.

In Sidon (population about 45 000) the Sunni majority threatened a general strike unless the Palestinian guerrillas

left the town, and Arafat's PASC moved in to arrest the troublemakers. There was considerable resentment against the Palestinians in the Shia villages around Sidon, which formed a defensive organisation called the 'National Front for the Safeguard of the South', to which Amal lent its support. There was also a general strike in East Beirut on the 27th. This was organised by the Lebanese Front to demand the return of former Christian inhabitants of Damour who had been driven out when the town was overrun by Palestinians in January 1976.

On 4 February Arafat agreed to close down all Palestinian offices in the south, except in some undefined strategic areas, but despite this Palestinian guerrillas were in the process of returning to the three refugee camps near Tyre, from which they had previously been ejected.

THE ADF CLASHES WITH THE LEBANESE ARMY

After a series of bomb explosions in Beirut in early February 1978, the ADF stepped up its security measures by introducing extra patrols and checkpoints. On the 7th, soldiers of the new Lebanese army objected to the ADF establishing a checkpoint near their barracks in the Christian Fayadiyah district. An argument crescendoed into a shootout in which almost 20 people were killed, and the 20-strong Syrian detachment was taken prisoner and held hostage. That dawn the bodies of two Christians had been found nearby.

The following day Syrian ADF troops surrounded and bombarded the barracks, setting part of the building on fire. The fighting spread to nearby districts, including Rumaniyeh, where the NLP militia was drawn into the action. It was said that the ADF wanted to establish its dominance in this Christian area. Later in the day Syrian troops bombarded Ashrafiyeh and shelled the HQ of the NLP militia, the presidential palace being hit by a stray shell. Syrian soldiers also attacked the NLP HQ, but were repulsed with the loss of five men, after which they moved in to high-rise buildings in order to dominate the area from there.

The Lebanese Hoss cabinet met that evening, but was

unable to do anything to reverse the rearousal of the old Christian versus Muslim antagonism, although an unofficial ceasefire did come into effect. Syrians still besieged the Lebanese army barracks in Fayadiyah.

On the 9th the Syrians once again shelled the barracks and NLP positions, which were being fortified. Pierre Gemayel expressed regret at the fighting and ordered his Falange militia to avoid hostilities with the ADF, although many Falangists became involved voluntarily. Chamoun accused the ADF of being an army of occupation. In Damascus, President Assad took a hard line and demanded the execution of those Lebanese officers who had ordered their troops to fire on Syrian soldiers, plus the immediate release of the 20 Syrian hostages. Firing died down later that evening, but both sides retained their confrontational positions. The unofficial death toll for the three days' fighting (7–9 February) was 100 or more Syrians and over 50 Lebanese. Hundreds were injured and several Muslims were murdered in Christian districts.

On the 12th President Sarkis ordered a tribunal to be established to determine who was responsible, and it was agreed that Lebanese army troops would join ADF soldiers at roadblocks and checkpoints in East Beirut. A special military tribunal was approved by the Chamber of Deputies (by 72 votes to one, some of the deputies being absent), which became effective on the 16th. The tribunal consisted of a Lebanese judge, one Lebanese army officer and three ADF officers, to function under Lebanese military law. This was a compromise solution between the demand that the accused Lebanese officers be handed over to the ADF and the strong Christian opinion that the ADF should leave Lebanon. Several Christian leaders, including Chamoun, criticised the tribunal.

In the intervening days there had been several bomb explosions in Beirut. Five Syrian soldiers had been killed and another abducted. On the 16th, Christian leaders obtained the release of the 20 Syrian hostages.

This incident had caused a rash of hostilities to break out in the south, and on the 13th hundreds of Lebanese Maronites had crossed into Israel through the 'open fence' accesses to demonstrate against Syrian intervention in

Lebanon, accusing Syria of inciting Palestinians to shell their villages. Back in Beirut, clashes broke out on 4 and 5 March between Muslims in the Shia sector and Christians in Rumaniyeh, but exchanges of fire were halted by the ADF, which threatened to shell every house from which firing originated.

FATAH RAID INTO ISRAEL

On 11 March 1978 an 11-strong Fatah seaborne commando unit landed on Israeli shore just south of Haifa and commandeered vehicles and buses. The commandos shot their way towards Tel Aviv until stopped by the Israeli police. In the ensuing shoot-out 34 Israelis and one American citizen were killed and more than 80 injured. Nine commandos, including the leader (a woman named by Israel as Dalal al-Mughrabi), were killed and two were taken prisoner. The operation had been a decisive statement by Arafat that there could be no overall Middle East settlement without Palestinian participation, the Camp David Framework Agreement talks being in progress. Those in southern Lebanon waited apprehensively for Israeli retribution as an Israeli invasion force had mustered near the border. However the invasion was held up for three days due to bad weather, which also debarred aerial activity.

ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON

Israel's punitive seven-day Operation Litani began on the evening of 14 March 1978, the object being to establish a 10-kilometre-wide security zone just inside Lebanon, to destroy all Palestinian bases within the zone and to remain there until assurance was given by the Palestinians that they would no longer conduct raids into Israel. The 20 000-strong Israeli invasion force, with tank, artillery and aircraft support, penetrated the Israeli–Lebanese border at three points. The Israeli defence minister stressed that there was no intention of striking at the ADF or attacking north of the red line, which lay slightly north of the Litani River.

The strip of terrain south of the river was about 40 miles in breadth and averaged about 20 miles in depth, with a mixed Christian–Shia population of about 30 000. The Palestinians had used the three-day respite to withdraw most of their armed militiamen from southern Lebanon, leaving 1000 or so to form a tactical resistance line.

Israeli aircraft struck at Tyre, from where the Fatah commando raid had been launched, as well as the three adjacent refugee camps (especially Rashidiyah, which had developed into a major Palestinian base) and several other targets.

The main Israeli land thrust, in the east of the country, was mounted from Metulla (in Israel) and moved towards the Arkoub region. By the end of the first day (the 15th) the Israeli troops had overrun Khiam and Ible al-Saki, meeting some resistance. Fierce fighting developed around Rashina el-Fakhar, near the slopes of Mount Hermon. The second thrust, in the centre, aimed for Bint Jabail and Maroun al-Ras, while the third contingent moved along the coastal road, taking Nakoura. In the afternoon Israeli aircraft made further attacks on Palestinian targets in Lebanon, including Damour and refugee camps near Beirut, for example the camp at Ouzi, a Palestinian naval base.

The advancing Israeli amoured troops relied upon massive fire power, regarding the terrain as a free-fire zone in which anything that moved was shot at. The Christian militias came out on the Israeli side and turned against the Muslims, looting the abandoned villages of the some 200 000 Muslims who had fled northwards from their homes.

One of the main Christian militias was headed by Major Saad Haddad, a former Lebanese army officer who had recruited Christian soldiers from the old Lebanese army. A few days previously this militia had occupied Marjayoun and held the adjacent Khardali bridge, thus blocking a Palestinian supply route.

Late on the 15th, Israeli Prime Minister Begin stated that the main object – to clear a corridor along the entire frontier – had been accomplished. The Israelis spent the next day mopping up, but on the 17th they stepped outside their intended boundary by overrunning the crossroad town of Tibnin, hindered by Palestinian resistance and mines.

Foreign Arab volunteers were rushing to support the Palestinians by this time.

On 17 March Israeli naval commandos made a raid near Tyre, while the Palestinians launched small counterattacks from their new defence line between Nabatiyeh and Sarafand on the coast. Throughout the fighting the ADF made no move to intervene on the side of the Palestinians, not even with anti-aircraft fire against raiding Israeli aircraft. On the ground the Israeli occupation stabilised. The coastal contingent had been held up at the village of Ras el-Beida, south of Tyre, so had failed to reach that port and the adjacent Kasmiyeh bridge and refugee camps, but it had managed partially to blockade that area.

UNIFIL

In New York, UN Security Council Resolution 425 was approved on 19 March 1978. The resolution called for a ceasefire and authorised the establishment of a UN Interim Force for Southern Lebanon (UNIFIL). The first UN troops arrived on the 22nd.

Israel had declared a ceasefire in the afternoon of the 21st, but the Palestinians refused to stop fighting until all Israeli soldiers had quit Lebanese territory. The Israeli expeditionary force began to withdraw on 7 April and was clear of Lebanon by mid June, although it retained some proxy control through Major Saad Haddad. Later the IDF admitted it had used 'cluster' (CBU) bombs, supplied by the United States under restrictions. These bombs contain a number of bomblets, which scatter steel splinters over a wide area.

The casualty figures for this seven-day operation were imprecise due to conflicting claims. The Lebanese government, a good recorder of such matters, stated that 1168 Lebanese and Palestinians had been killed; Israel admitted to the loss of 27, but claimed to have killed 350 Palestinians; while the Palestinians admitted to the loss of 144 men and the capture of one Israeli prisoner.

UNIFIL established an HQ in Nakoura, its stated task being to disarm and turn back the infiltrators, and by the

end of May its strength had reached almost 4000. UNIFIL had met a hostile reception and soon suffered casualties from landmines.

At a meeting of Lebanese government and PLO representatives on 24 May, Arafat, in a five-point statement, agreed not to oppose UNIFIL, nor to prevent the reestablishment of Lebanese sovereignty over southern Lebanon. He also said he was raising a 500-man commando force to supplement his PASC in order to help UNIFIL prevent Palestinian reinfiltration into the south, but Israel was soon complaining that Palestinian militiamen were moving back into southern Lebanon.

HADDAD'S CHRISTIAN MILITIA

Israel took full advantage of its brief military occupation of southern Lebanon to construct a network of roads linking Christian-inhabited villages with each other, and also to strengthen and rearm Major Haddad's Christian militia, soon to become over 2000 strong. The militia was entrenched along a vital ten-mile, Muslim-inhabited sector of the western part of the frontier. Haddad refused to bow down to UNIFIL's demand that he hand over his weapons and confine his men to barracks in Marjayoun and Koleya, nor would he allow UNIFIL to take over security duties until the arrival of the Lebanese army. UNIFIL backed down and confrontation was avoided by an agreement on 12 June that allowed the Christian militiamen to retain their arms, and also restricted UN patrols into Haddad's area.

THE ADF IN ACTION AGAIN

On 28 March 1978 the Arab Deterrent Force was granted a six-month extension by the Arab League Council of Foreign Ministers, in which Syrian dominance increased as contributing Arab states withdrew their national contingents. It continued to be nominally commanded by a Lebanese officer, Colonel Sami Khataib, but it was the commander of the Syrian detachment who called the shots. Tension between

Christians and Muslims had remained high in Beirut since the clashes in February, and it continued to smoulder. The underlying reason for this was the controversial question of partition, which some Christian factions were trying to bring about while the Syrians were pressing for the formation of a Lebanese government of national unity.

Hostilities broke out again in Beirut on 9 April between Christians and Muslims, each blaming the other for starting them. The Christians claimed that Palestinians had been firing at them, and that the ADF had failed to take adequate measures to restrain them. As the fighting intensified the ADF came into action against Christians in East Beirut, and on the 12th and 13th it used artillery fire to bombard apartment blocks, houses and buildings, including a hospital, causing extensive damage. Although the Syrians claimed they were being impartial in trying to suppress the factional battle, few Syrian shells fell on Muslim areas. After repeated failures by negotiators – including Presidents Sarkis and Assad, the ADF commander, and Chamoun and Gemayel – a ceasefire was eventually brought about on the 14th. During this five-day spasm of fighting it was estimated that over 100 Christians and Muslims, mainly civilians, were killed, as well as five Syrian soldiers.

On 19 April Prime Minister Selim Hoss resigned, after being accused by Christians of ordering the ADF to shell the Christian suburb of Ain Rumaniyeh, but was asked to stay on as caretaker until a new government could be formed. On the 23rd a Chamber of Deputies committee, composed of leaders of the principal religious and political groups and headed by the speaker, Kamal Assad, produced a six-point national accord, the main provisions of which included banning all private militias – Muslim, Christian and Palestinian – and their activities; the halting of all Palestinian activity in Lebanon; and the continued reconstruction of the Lebanese army on a national basis. This was endorsed by the deputies on the 27th (75 voting in favour). Walid Jumblatt, the new Druse leader, signalled his approval, but the Palestinians protested vigorously, insisting that they would continue their struggle against Israel from Lebanese soil.

5 Christian Fratricide: 1978–80

During May 1978, differences between the Lebanese Front and ex-President Sulieman Franjieh, who maintained good relations with the Syrians, resulted in a number of violent confrontations between their respective militias. In addition the Falangists had been encroaching into areas in northern Lebanon traditionally controlled by the Franjieh family, which led to a reconciliation between Franjieh and former Prime Minister Rashid Karami, now heading the mainly Sunni Muslim Democratic Front, their relations having been abrasive since their periods in office had coincided.

Previously, in March, hard-line Christians had sabotaged the Syrian-backed Lebanese government's efforts to create a national unity cabinet. During this political crisis only Sulieman Franjieh had stayed loyal to the former Christian alliance with Syria, and had walked out on the Lebanese Front. Franjieh's defection was followed by a struggle with the Falangists for dominance in the north.

On 13 May a detachment of Falangist militia descended on the village of Ehden, south-east of Tripoli and the home of Tony Franjieh, son of Sulieman Franjieh, deputy for Zghorta and commander of the Zghorta Liberation Army. Falangist militiamen surrounded the village and then attacked the Franjieh home, killing Franjieh, his wife, daughter and staff. The small ZLA detachment guarding the house fought back, and in the vicious exchange of fire each side probably lost about 30 men. The killing of Tony Franjieh was widely condemned and some 20 000 mourners attend his funeral on the 14th, including Prime Minister Hoss. Coincident with the Franjieh funeral was an ADF raid on the village of Deir al-Ahmeh, some 15 miles south of Ehden, where Syrian troops stormed the police station, killed a policemen, made a number of arrests and demolished several houses, alleging that the occupants had refused to hand over suspects.

In May, Selim Hoss, scraping along with his eight-man

cabinet of technocrats and failing to form a government of national reconciliation, again tendered his resignation, to be told by President Sarkis to form a government anyway in order to ensure some sort of stability. Accordingly on 2 July he formed a 12-man cabinet of six Muslims and six Christians, of whom only seven were members of the Chamber of Deputies, the others being little-known technocrats. On 9 August the cabinet was eventually approved by the Chamber by 54 votes to nine.

The new defence minister was Fuad Boutros (Greek Orthodox). He took over from General Victor Khoury, who had also been army commander since March 1977. In accordance with new regulations forbidding army officers to hold political offices. Khoury resigned from the Lebanese army and General Mounir Tarabay became the new army commander. The restructuring of the national army on non-confessional lines, and its deployment in conflict areas, continued to be opposed by both Muslims and Christians, each claiming that any reorganisation favoured the other.

On 28 June 1978 unknown gunmen, suspected to be ADF troops, kidnapped and killed at least 30 Greek Catholics from four Christian villages in the Bekaa Valley. Both Chamoun and Gemayel alleged that this was part of a Syrian plot to eliminate the Christian community in Lebanon. The Lebanese government announced a new security plan for northern Lebanon, which involved reinforcing its local security forces by units of the ADF and the Lebanese army in the Ehden–Zghorta area.

A STATE WITHIN A STATE

Fighting between Christian militias and Syrian ADF troops in East Beirut began on 1 July 1978 in the traditional trouble spot of Ain Rumaniyeh, an NLP base, and the following day extended all along the 'confrontation line' between East and West Beirut. The Syrians launched rocket, tank and artillery bombardments, causing extensive damage to buildings. The HQs of both the NLP and the Falangists were hit on the second day. As the bombardment continued, water and electricity supplies were severed and there was

great difficulty in rescuing people from damaged buildings and getting the injured to hospital. The Syrians seemed content to bombard East Beirut from the confrontation line rather than entering built-up Christian areas, which would have meant incurring heavy casualties in house-to-house fighting. This was really the first time that the Falangists had been fully and officially involved in a battle with Syrian troops, as previously the NLP militia had made most of the running in this respect. During the first week of July more than 250 people were killed, the majority of whom were Christian civilians.

The Christians claimed that the Syrian bombardments had been entirely unprovoked, while the Syrians claimed they had been in response to the death of a Syrian soldier. Camille Chamoun accused them of attempting genocide against the Christian community in Beirut, which he estimated to number about 600 000, and appealed for international intervention and aid. An exodus of Christian refugees began from East Beirut. Some sought shelter to the north, while others went farther afield to Cyprus, Europe or even the United States. The Lebanese Muslims were glad to see the Christian population declining in this way. Now determined to break the hard-line Christian militia power, for the first time the Damascus press openly named the Falangist and NLP militias as enemies.

On 4 July Chamoun again called for the withdrawal of the ADF, insisting that only the Lebanese army should be responsible for security in Beirut. His demand was rejected by Prime Minister Hoss and the Syrian government accused the Christian leaders of wanting to forge a 'state within a state'. New conditions for a ceasefire were laid down, including further reinforcement and deployment of the ADF, restructuring the Lebanese army to eliminate its Christian majority, and the dismissal of all Lebanese army officers who had collaborated with Israelis in the south. The Syrian government also demanded that restrictions be put immediately on all Christian militias, including curbs on their political role and propaganda output, and that they cease all criticism of the Syrian media and Syrian government policies.

On 6 July Elias Sarkis, who had been president for some

two years and was often regarded as being in office but not in power, suddenly announced he would resign as he was not prepared to continue as president in name only. He alleged that the ADF was carrying out operations behind his back, or entirely without his approval, and that the new Syrian conditions for a ceasefire were neither logical nor acceptable.

Coincident with Sarkis' resignation threat, Israeli combat aircraft flew low over Beirut for almost half an hour, emitting sonic booms in a warning display. An IDF spokesman accused the Syrians of trying to destroy the military potential of the Christian militias, thus creating a military vacuum that Syria would hasten to fill. Israel again promised not to allow the Christian population of Lebanon to be annihilated.

The point must have been taken, as Syrian shelling ceased the following day. However sniping from Christian positions continued for a short while longer, as units of the Lebanese army positioned themselves between Muslim and Christian communities in the capital. There was also a reduction in the number of Syrian troops in Beirut, despite the fact the Syrians had been reluctant to accept the ceasefire. One of their detachments, comprising some 150 soldiers, remained besieged within the Christian locality of Ashrafiyeh, one of the main battlefields, as the Christians refused to allow them safe conduct out of the area. On the 15th President Sarkis decided he would not resign after all, but warned that he would step down if another confrontation occurred.

ANOTHER SECURITY PLAN

Peace remained elusive and Syrian shelling of East Beirut recommenced on 22 July 1978. Anticipating that the chaotic and dangerous situation would deteriorate further, on the 27th all dependants of US embassy personnel were evacuated from Lebanon, and all other Americans were advised to leave the country as soon as possible. This increased the Christians' alarm and stimulated further civilian evacuation from East Beirut.

After a series of emergency meetings involving President

Sarkis, Prime Minister Hoss, Lebanese Foreign Minister Fuad Boutros and the Lebanese army commander, now Colonel Samir Khataib, eventually on 9 August another ceasefire was grudgingly enforced and yet another security plan unveiled. It catered for a consolidation of the ceasefire, the replacement of Syrian troops in Christian areas by the Lebanese army and security forces, the simultaneous disarming of all private militias, the deployment of ADF troops around Beirut, and Syrian control of the Beirut suburbs and Palestinian refugee camps. All these measures had been suggested before at one time or another. The Syrian detachment marooned in Ashrafiyeh was released.

During the remainder of August spasmodic violence continued to break out in Beirut. For example on the 13th a bomb hit Palestinian offices, causing many casualties, and on the 27th there was a sharp exchange of fire between Christians and Muslims along the confrontation line.

During the last week of the month ADF forces launched a series of attacks on militia positions in the Christian enclave to the north of Beirut, mainly in and around Batroun but also in the Bekaa Valley. The Lebanese death toll was estimated at almost 70, and that of the Syrians at about 20 (Lebanese police records). On the 29th, one authority calculated that the ADF had taken control of one third of the Christian enclave (*Time Magazine*).

During September fighting rumbled on in the now customary pattern in East Beirut, mainly in the Hadath and Ain Rumaniyeh districts, and on numerous occasions Israeli combat aircraft flew low over the capital to indicate support for the Christian community. East Beirut, which had been extensively damaged and nearly paralysed by Syrian rocket, tank and artillery fire since July, came to a complete standstill on 13 September in response to a call for a one-day strike by six Christian political groups. The groups were demanding the complete withdrawal of all Syrian troops from Christian districts, a safe passage home for displaced people and non-renewal of the ADF's mandate.

Another intensive bout of Syrian shelling was launched on East Beirut in October, in which it was estimated that more than 800 Lebanese were killed and over 1500 injured. The Syrian casualty figures were not ascertainable. Journalists

reported that practically every building in East Beirut bore scars of the bombardments, that many had been destroyed by fire and that hundreds of people had fled, some to Cyprus (*Le Figaro*).

WESTERN PEACE EFFORTS

On 6 October 1978 US President Carter, who had already proposed a UN-sponsored international conference on Lebanon and the restoration of authority to President Sarkis, with French cooperation persuaded the UN Security Council to approve Resolution 436, which called for a ceasefire in Lebanon and speedy evacuation of the wounded. Pictures of scenes in East Beirut were horrifying the world. Another ceasefire was scheduled for the 7th but the Christians remained defiant – they probably hoped that Israeli combat aircraft would eventually come in on their side against the Syrians. On the 5th Israel had carried out a naval raid on a PLO base near Tripoli, claiming it was a preemptive strike to forestall an imminent Palestinian raid on Israel.

Representatives of the six ADF contributing countries (Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates) met in Beit Eddin (20 miles south-east of Beirut), and on 18 October produced an eight-point plan for stability in Lebanon. It was pro-Arab, pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel in tone and mainly consisted of old platitudes. The secret plan was to replace the 10 000 or so Syrian soldiers in East Beirut with 3500 from the United Arab Emirates, 1500 from Saudi Arabia and 5000 from Jordan (which was not in the ADF), to be used for police duties only. This was completely divorced from reality.

About 300 Saudi Arabian troops did appear briefly on 20 October and took up positions at various points along the confrontation line, at which point some Syrian troops did pull back. The ADF discussions on the redeployment issue continued fruitlessly until 15 November, when there was a resurgence of violence in East Beirut and at least six Syrian soldiers were killed. Ten or more Syrian soldiers were killed on the 21st when their bus was blown apart by a landmine near Aley in the Chouf region.

Previously there had been an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Fuad Boutros, the Lebanese foreign minister. He had been on his way to a conference in Baghdad when his car was ambushed en route to the airport. In another incident the Lebanese Revolutionary Party, led by Samir al-Ashkar, clashed with the Lebanese army – Al-Ashkar and 13 of his militiamen were killed in the gun battle. Yet another illustrative incident occurred on 8 December, when the Saudi ambassador was injured when his helicopter was caught up in cross-fire over Junieh. Dany Chamoun visited the ambassador in hospital on the 15th, and while he was there the hospital was surrounded by Mourabitoun militiamen. A seven-hour siege ensued – in which a Lebanese army officer was killed and others wounded – before order was restored by Muslim and Christian leaders.

JANUARY 1979: A VIOLENT MONTH

In southern Lebanon, January 1979 was dominated by clashes between Israeli armed forces and Palestinian guerrillas. It all began on the 13th, when the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), led by Nayef Hawatmeh, left Lebanese territory to raid the Israeli border town of Maalot, causing casualties. Israel reacted swiftly, and the following day Israeli artillery shelled a building just south of Tyre, alleged to be a DFLP base.

On the 18th a bomb exploded in a Jerusalem market. The Palestinians were blamed, and in retaliation an Israeli armoured force of 'several hundred men' crossed into southern Lebanon the following day. Their aim was to get behind the UNIFIL troops to strike at Palestinian bases, and they travelled by way of Arnoun, five miles north of the border, and Aissiyeh, five miles further on. At the same time Israeli gunboats shelled Palestinian positions near Tyre. The Israelis claimed they killed 16 guerrillas, destroyed Arnoun and Aissiyeh by artillery fire and blew up houses in Hammodiya (IDF press release).

On the 19th Palestinian guerrillas fired rockets into Nahariyah and Kiryat Shimona, both Israeli frontier towns. Israel replied by shelling Palestinian positions in Nabatiyeh,

supplemented by Haddad's militia. In return the Palestinians fired more rockets into northern Israel, and Israel again replied with heavy artillery barrages into southern Lebanon. The Rashidiyah, Bourj al-Shemali and al-Bass Palestinian refugee camps, near Tyre, were also targets. The Lebanese government complained that the Israeli shelling was deliberately indiscriminate, that many casualties were being incurred and that hundreds of refugees were streaming northwards.

Under pressure from the United States, Prime Minister Hoss and Yassir Arafat met the ambassadors of the five permanent member countries of the UN Security Council on the 23rd in Beirut. Arafat promised that the Palestinian cross-border hostilities would cease the following day. The United States persuaded the Israelis to do likewise and for a while there was comparative quiet along the Israeli–Lebanese border. A brief break in the ceasefire took place when a bomb exploded in the Israeli coastal town of Nathanya, killing two people and injuring others. The PLO claimed responsibility, saying it had been in retaliation for an explosion in Beirut on the 22nd, which had killed a PLO leader (Ali Hassan Salameh), four bodyguards and five passers-by. The PLO blamed the Israeli Mossad.

UNIFIL PROBLEMS

From the start UNIFIL found it difficult to assert its authority in its allocated region, and it met hostility from both Palestinian and Christian militias. Like most UN resolutions, Resolution 425, which mandated the UNIFIL presence in Lebanon, was vague in some details, this being the only way to ensure its approval by the Security Council. The UNIFIL commander, for example, assumed that UN Resolution 425 overrode the Cairo Agreement of 1969, which allowed the Palestinians to remain in Lebanon and operate from it against Israel.

Friction often led to violence: for example, on 3 February a gun battle suddenly erupted near Qana (five miles southeast of Tyre): two UN soldiers were killed. The Palestinians alleged that the UN troops had kidnapped a PFLP member and executed him.

LEBANESE FREE STATE

On 18 April 1979 Major Saad Haddad proclaimed the independent 'Lebanese Free State' in his Christian enclave in southern Lebanon, this being provoked by the arrival of a 650-strong detachment of the new Lebanese army to take over his area. In Lebanese annals this is known as the 'Kawkaba Incident', as the detachment was halted by Haddad's troops at the village of Kawkaba when on its way to take up positions in Tibnin. Haddad complained that the Lebanese army was oversympathetic to the PLO, the Syrians and 'some foreign organisation', meaning UNIFIL. He proclaimed that his intention was to free Lebanon of all invaders and foreign powers. He called upon President Sarkis to resign and declared the Chamber of Deputies to be illegal.

By this time Haddad virtually controlled an eight-mile-wide strip of territory along the entire length of the Israeli frontier. He had been able to accomplish this largely because of the exodus of much of the Muslim population, allowing Christian-inhabited, or majority, villages openly to support him. Haddad had become something of a hero, not only to harassed southern Christians, but to Lebanese Christians in general, a fact played down by the international press, which tended to depict him as yet another inconvenient warlord. Although Israel had been giving military aid to Haddad for some time and was pleased by this turn of events, it remained cautious and hesitant about openly backing him, which of course it would have to do if Haddad was to remain a significant factor.

Angry and dismayed, the Lebanese government officially discharged Major Haddad from its service, which brought to light the interesting fact that since the nominal end of the Third Civil War in November 1976, Major Haddad and all his soldiers, recruited from the old Lebanese army, had been on full pay. Israel had to assume a heavier burden than had been anticipated. Press criticism was showered on the Lebanese government for 'paying two armies to fight each other'.

Haddad's Christian militia celebrated its self-assumed independent status on the evening of the 18th by besieging

the UNIFIL HQ in Nakoura and pounding it with artillery fire. One UN soldier was killed, eight were injured and several helicopters were destroyed. The siege was maintained for several days, despite international criticism, during which time Haddad's men fired on Lebanese army troops trying to advance to the rescue. Israel objected to Lebanese troops being so near their border, but under US pressure it reluctantly agreed to their staying, provided they did not enter the Christian enclave.

This was a tense and delicate time in Middle East affairs as Egypt and Israel had signed a peace agreement on 26 March 1979. This had dismayed and shocked the Arab world, in particular Syria and the Palestinians, who had refused to recognise it. The United States and Israel wanted to freeze all Palestinian operations.

On 27 March Haddad called a conference of all heads of municipal councils in southern Lebanon. He informed them that a military council had been formed and was carrying out the functions of government, but oddly enough stressed that his militia was still part of the Lebanese Front. He announced that all males, both Christian and Muslim, aged 18 to 45 would be conscripted, and the enclave's defence force would comprise three elements: village militia, internal security, and a strike force, the latter's task being to stop foreigners infiltrating back into southern Lebanon.

Haddad set about firmly imposing his authority on his southern Lebanese frontier strip. For example on the 22nd he issued an ultimatum to the Muslim-majority village of Ible al-Saki to support him or face an attack. In the ensuing weeks Haddad repeated this tactic, inducing a number of mixed or depleted Muslim villages to join him. Eventually Haddad's fiefdom comprised about 500 square miles, with a population of about 100 000 people, the majority of whom were probably Christian due to the departure of the Muslim refugees. Haddad's armed forces consisted of about 1300 full-time soldiers and 800 civil guardsmen, the latter fully equipped by Israel.

On 22 April the Palestine Liberation Front, led by Mohammed Zeidan, made an attack on the Israeli town of Nahariyeh – killing four Israelis and injuring others – as a

statement of protest against the Egyptian–Israeli peace agreement. In retaliation Israel mounted a series of sea, land and air strikes against Palestinian bases in southern Lebanon, just north of the Christian enclave, that lasted until the UN brokered a ceasefire on the 26th. UN sources estimated that over 60 died in these attacks, and the Israelis claimed to have killed 27 Palestinian guerrillas. The northwards exodus of Muslim civilians increased.

ISRAELI HARASSMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS

On 9 May 1979 an Israel unit crossed into Lebanon in pursuit of three members of the PFLP who had launched a raid on Israel. Their destination was Shakra, where a UNIFIL detachment was stationed. The Israelis demanded that a search be made for the fugitives, and that they be handed over. UNIFIL refused, and after a few hours the Israelis were persuaded to withdraw. This was part of the new Israeli policy adopted after the PSF raid on Nahariyah on 22 April: instead of confining their activities to retaliating when Palestinians struck at Israel, their policy now included constant harassment.

Previously, on the 7th, Prime Minister Begin of Israel had offered to conclude a peace treaty with Lebanon, but Prime Minister Hoss had refused.

The Israelis continued their harassment raids against Palestinian bases in Lebanon for the remainder of the month, venturing as far north as Damour. Among other operations, on the 18th Israel launched a seaborne attack on the Saiqa base in Insariyah, just north of Tyre, in which several Saiqa members were killed and stocks of ammunition destroyed, and on the 23rd Israeli aircraft bombed a PFLP-GC base in Naama, near Damour. These activities increased the northward flow of refugees, causing the Lebanese government to appeal to richer Arab states for aid for the 'displaced persons'. A UN-brokered ceasefire involving Israel came into effect on 31 May, after which, although Israeli aircraft flew over Palestinian positions in Lebanon and Israeli gunboats patrolled off the Lebanese coast, the attacks were less frequent.

Arafat announced on 6 June that he had begun to move his armed militias from southern Lebanon in order to avoid civilian casualties, that he was closing the PLO HQs in Tyre and Nabatiyeh, and that all PLO personnel would move at 'least two-miles from the nearest village'. However they did not go far, and on the 19th Haddad's militia shelled some UNIFIL positions, alleging that Palestinians were still infiltrating southwards through them.

CHRISTIAN FACTIONAL FIGHTING

Meanwhile factional confrontation was developing in central and northern Lebanon. A sudden bout of fierce fighting occurred from 12–15 May 1979, mainly around the Christian districts of Fern al-Shebak and Ain Rumaniyeh, between the NLP militia and the Guardians of the Cedar, a Falangist group. Late on the 15th, when the fighting subsided, both parties announced they would amalgamate their commands under the joint leadership of Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun, the intention being to form a joint executive committee. Little came of this and on the 20th the two rival militias again clashed in battle, this time around Akoura, some 40 miles north of Beirut. Lebanese army troops were deployed to try to restore order.

This was followed by another five-day battle between the NLP and the Guardians of the Cedar on their former stamping ground around Fern el-Shebak and Ain Rumaniyeh. Once again the Lebanese army moved in to stop the fighting. On 4 June Pierre Gemayel was ambushed on the road between Beirut and Junieh. His vehicle was set on fire by a rocket, which killed one person and injured 13 others, one being Gemayel. Falange extremists were suspected. Another clash occurred on 14–15 August, when Christian militias fought each other for possession of the Beirut port area. Several militiamen were injured. On the 16th Lebanese army troops entered the port area without resistance and took up positions in the buffer zone between the Christians and the Muslims, to replace withdrawing Saudi troops.

THE ARMENIAN PROBLEM

Tension continued between the Falange and the Armenian community in Jour Hammond and Nabaa, owing to the Armenians' neutralist stance in the 1976 confrontation. Two days of fighting broke out between them on 10 August 1979. A Falangist group alleged that the Armenians were seeking to establish an autonomous area, but the Armenians claimed the Falangists were trying to suppress their community and force it to change its policy of neutrality. The fighting began when Armenians attacked a Falangist patrol taking part in raids on illegal gambling and drug premises, in the course of which the Falangists had blown up several Armenian restaurants and shops. A ceasefire was enforced on the 12th after some 30 people had been killed and over 50 injured. In this clash hostages had been taken by both sides, but most were later released.

KIDNAPPING

Kidnapping remained a major problem as factions sought to abduct members of rival groups for insurance purposes, for exchange or for vengeance. Several militias had their own secret prisons for this purpose, reviving a medieval military custom. Kidnapping was particularly common in the dispute between the NLP and Falangists in the northern areas. One such interfactional instance occurred on 22 April 1979, when alleged NLP militiamen, posing as guests at a wedding in Jubail, killed seven Falangists and abducted others, four of whom where later found murdered.

This practise cropped up again on 8 October, when Falange militiamen kidnapped about 40 travellers on a road in the north, demanding the return of comrades and supporters who had been ejected from their homes and villages by the Zghorta Liberation Army. It was claimed that several thousand had been driven out following the death of Tony Franjieh. In response NLP supporters set up roadblocks and abducted people associated with the Falange Party. Appeals for the release of the hostages failed despite pleas from the pope and other Christian dignities.

It was alleged that a hitherto unknown group, the ORN (Organisation of Revolutionaries of the North), believed to be a Falangist organisation, had abducted and killed eight of Franjieh's men. On the 11th President Sarkis ordered Lebanese army units into the region, while Franjieh was persuaded to release 190 hostages to Red Cross officials. Hostage taking was endemic in this internecine confrontation. Many incidents were unreported and secret exchanges were often made. On 20 August, after a bomb explosion in East Beirut had killed seven Falangist militiamen, NLP gunmen, disguised as monks, attacked a Falangist post in Berbare, between Tripoli and Beirut, killing three, wounding three and abducting three.

UNIFIL'S MANDATE RENEWED

After UN Security Council discussions in June the mandate for the 6000-man UNIFIL was renewed for another six months, it being assumed that adequate security would be established around its HQ in Nakoura, that Israeli harassment of the civilian population would cease and that cooperation with the PLO would continue. All unrealistic assumptions.

During August 1979 the Israelis, working in conjunction with Haddad's militia, continued to harass Palestinian bases in Lebanon, frequently crossing the border to blow up houses. Despite a UN-brokered ceasefire on the 26th, a UN statement alleged that in 'recent weeks, some 100 people have been killed, and 270 000 rendered homeless', Israel being blamed. The same pattern continued into September, for example on 20 September Palestinians thwarted an Israeli incursion towards the Khardali bridge, and there were occasional clashes between Israeli and Syrian planes. On 4 October the PLO announced a unilateral ceasefire in southern Lebanon, but the PFLP and other Palestinian groups disassociated themselves from this decision. Israeli harassment became less frequent, and in December UNIFIL was granted a further extension.

A poorly attended Arab League summit was held in Tunis in the dismal atmosphere of November. President Sarkis

and his foreign minister, Fuad Boutros, sought desperately to separate their southern Lebanon problem from the overall Middle East crisis, hoping to reestablish a quiet border with Israel, as had been achieved by other Arab confrontation states. This required the withdrawal of all Palestinian militiamen from the south and a halt to all Palestinian activity against Israel from Lebanese territory. Sarkis and Boutros failed to win Arab support, the Arab leaders insisting that all agreements with the Palestinians must be honoured.

ADF REDEPLOYMENT: JANUARY 1980

During January 1980 Syria unilaterally decided to move its remaining 23 000 ADF troops from their existing positions to others east of Beirut and in the Bekaa Valley. The ADF mandate was extended for a further six months on the 26th, and by the end of the month some 4000 Syrian troops had been moved eastwards. This Syrian decision caused considerable concern to the Lebanese prime minister, the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Prime Minister Hoss rushed to Damascus, only to be told by President Assad that his decision was irrevocable, and so he had to announce on 6 February that his government had decided to replace the ADF troops with Lebanese army units, whose strength was now estimated at about 22 000. Neither Arafat nor Walid Jumblatt trusted the Lebanese army, alleging it was too Christian-dominated.

It was assumed by the West that Assad wanted to renounce his role as the 'policeman of Lebanon' before he became too involved in the unwinnable, multisided civil war in that country, and that as he had shouldered the responsibility for some four years it was now time for Lebanon to stand on its own, to work towards national reconciliation and to rebuild its economy. The Syrians, whose initial intervention had saved the Christians from elimination, had since fought against them.

Assad was concerned about the hostility shown to Syrian troops in Lebanon by aggressive Christian militias, now armed and supported by Israel. The militias were openly

calling his ADF an 'army of occupation' and were demanding its withdrawal. His troops were in danger of becoming involved in a guerrilla war that would be unwinnable and costly in manpower. In addition the press was commenting on the fact that Syrian troops in Lebanon were becoming involved in corruption of various types. This was damaging to discipline and efficiency, so it would be best to move the troops away form urban areas. The Syrians generally distrusted President Sarkis, complaining that he reneged on commitments, was too sympathetic to Christian elements and was trying to limit Palestinian movement, rather than working against Israel, the Arab enemy. Israel saw the ADF's move to the Bekaa areas as a threat to Haddad's militia.

It was more than likely that Assad's decision had been made for him by the ruling Baath Party at its congress in Damascus, which recommended that the ADF should be equally deployed between Christian- and Muslim-held areas. However protests by President Sarkis and others persuaded Assad to delay the redeployment and regrouping of the ADF.

Formally accepting the Syrian decision, on 4 March Sarkis broadcast a message to the Lebanese people. He emphasised the need for his government to establish its authority throughout the country and rejected partition and the elimination of all non-Lebanese armed forces, but urged all to accept a 'national pact' to stimulate the process of reconciliation. On the 15th the Lebanese cabinet approved a new defence policy (to be implemented by the Higher Defence Council), based on resisting Israeli occupation in the south and cooperating with the Palestinians and UNIFIL. This was approved by the Chamber of Deputies on the 25th.

Redeployment of the ADF began in late January 1980 and on 10 February, when the ADF units pulled out from Sidon, the Mourabitoun moved in to take possession of government building and offices. In East Beirut indiscriminate sniping across the Green Line, blocked off the port area on the 26th. ADF troops withdrew from their positions along the Green Line on 7 March, to be replaced by Lebanese army soldiers. After that the ADF redeployment

slowed down, with Syrians remaining to police the West Beirut area and major roads.

CHRISTIAN DISUNITY CONTINUES

The Christian disunity was deeprooted. A clash occurred towards the end of January 1980 between Falange and NLP militias near Jubail, leaving several dead. This was followed on 12 February by fighting between Falangists and the 'Marda' section of the Zghorta Liberation Army, mainly around Qnat and Mazrat Bani Saab, which continued for several days. Syrian ADF soldiers joined the fight in support of Franjieh's ZLA militiamen, claiming they had only become involved because Falangists had fired on a Syrian patrol, killing one soldier. However the Falangists insisted it was because the ADF wanted to dominate this part of Lebanon.

On the 13th Franjieh's men captured a Falange Deputy (Edmond Rizk) and took him to Zghorta. His release was contingent on the freeing of six members of the Franjieh family who had been held prisoner by the Falangists since October 1979. The fighting continued, mainly around Qnat, and on the 17th several ministers in the Hoss government threatened to resign unless it was stopped and a ceasefire arranged. The Lebanese government stated that in this outburst of violence 14 Syrians and four Falangists had been killed, and some 2000 had fled the area. An exchange of hostages began on 4 March.

The mutual hate campaign between the two militias continued with indiscriminate acts of terrorism in Beirut. On 23 February a car-bomb exploded as the car in which Bashir Gemayel's young daughter was travelling came alongside, killing her, two bodyguards and three bystanders. A similar explosion occurred on 12 March, when Camille Chamoun suffered minor injuries and a bodyguard was killed. Followers of Franjieh were the suspected culprits.

SOUTHERN LEBANON

In southern Lebanon in the Christian enclave, from January onwards Major Haddad stepped up his pressure against the Palestinians, who responded aggressively whenever they could. One example occurred on 11 February, when Palestinians based in Marjayoun, outside the enclave, planted landmines on the Christian village of Deir Mimas, just inside the enclave. Four villagers were killed by the mines and a gunbattle ensued between Haddad's militiamen and Palestinians positioned at Beaufort Castle, an old Crusader fortification situated on a commanding geographical feature. Israeli aircraft made frequent reconnaissance flights over southern Lebanon. The tension increased as rumours circulated that the PLO had received several vintage Soviet T-34 tanks, and that promised Iranian volunteers were arriving, raising fears of a PLO attack.

UNIFIL was experiencing difficulties in southern Lebanon. In particular its 700-strong Irish contingent became the target of Haddad's militia, who accused the Irish of favouring the PLO. On 10 February the Irish foreign minister had expressed his support for Palestinian independence, a statement Major Haddad demanded be withdrawn. During April there were frequent Christian militia attacks against UNIFIL personnel, beginning on the 7th, when Haddad's men established themselves in villages in the Irish detachment's sector. Fire was exchanged for two days: one UN soldier was killed and another wounded. On the 11th Christian militiamen fired on a UN supply convoy and besieged UN soldiers in their post for several days. Their supply of food and water ran short and some UN soldiers were briefly taken hostage, but then Haddad agreed to allow the supply route to be reopened.

Later Haddad's men fired on the UN HQ in Nakoura, damaging its helicopter fleet, and on the 17th they forced UN soldiers from their outpost and seized electronic monitoring equipment. The following day Christian militiamen ambushed a UN convoy near Bint Jabail. Three Irish soldiers were disarmed and handed over to villagers in Attir: of the soldiers, two were killed but the third escaped. Haddad and Israel blamed the Shia villagers for the murders, but

UNIFIL blamed Haddad, and indirectly the Israelis. A UN intelligence report later indicated that Haddad had threatened the villagers of Attir with a large forfeit if they did not produce the bodies of the two Irish soldiers.

6 Violence and Invasion: 1980–82

The situation in southern Lebanon remained tense and explosive during the second quarter of 1980. Israel alleged that hundreds of Palestinian guerrilla fighters were in the UNIFIL area, but the UN said there were only 220, and they had been there when UNIFIL moved in. On 6 April a five-man commando unit of the Iraqi-supported Arab Liberation Front entered Israel to strike at the Misgav kibbutz. They killed several people, but were themselves wiped out by Israeli security forces. This roused Israel into renewed anti-Palestinian activity, and on the 9th an Israeli armoured infantry force of over 300 men moved into southern Lebanon. They stayed there for some time, constructing fortifications for Major Haddad's militia (they had brought with them heavy earth-moving machinery for the purpose) and building approach and linking roads ready for swift access whenever needed.

In April Israel launched several other raids into southern Lebanon, including a seaborne raid against Sarafand, a Palestinian base. In May there were two more seaborne raids on the southern Lebanese coast, as well as bombardments of Palestinian refugee camps near Tyre and the long-range shelling of Sidon. In June Israel again attacked the Sidon area, causing Arafat to move his PLO offices from Sidon to adjacent refugee camps: his previous promise to do so had not been carried out. Israeli raiders also destroyed ALF buildings near the Kasmiyeh bridge and destroyed houses in several Muslim villages. Thereafter the southern Lebanese border area remained comparatively quiet until August.

In March 1980 in the Beirut area, tension and friction developed among some Muslim militia groups, provoked by the increasingly abrasive relations between Iraq and Iran. The Shia Amal militia, reputedly partly sponsored by Iran, clashed with Fatah, supported by Iraq. On 15 April Amal

organised a general strike and demonstrations in Beirut, protesting again about the disappearance of its religious leader, Imam Musa Sadr, who had not been seen since he visited Colonel Gaddafi in Libya and was believed to be still detained by him.

Shias forced shops in Beirut to close, burned tyres on the roads and otherwise disrupted traffic. Shia demonstrators praised Ayatollah Khomeini, who had come to power in Iran in February 1979, and denounced Saddam Hussein, the president of Iraq. Pro-Iraqi elements intervened and fighting developed in the Beirut districts of Shia and Bourj al-Brajneh. On the 16th the fighting swirled around the Iraqi embassy, which brought intervention by the ADF. The turmoil subsided the following day. On 20 May an Iranian senior cleric was shot dead while motoring through Beirut, which sparked off more protest demonstrations.

Friction between rival Iranian- and Iraqi-backed militias broke out in Baalbek on 26 July, interrupting the funeral procession of Riad Taha, a Lebanese press baron who had been shot dead by unknown gunmen in Beirut on the 23rd. Selim Hoss and several other government VIPs attending the funeral had to take refugee in a hotel. On the 28th a prominent pro-Iraqi Palestinian was shot dead in Beirut, which provoked a bout of fighting between the Amal militia and the pro-Iraqi Baath Party militia, again centred around the Iraqi embassy. Iran and Iraq were fighting by proxy in Lebanon.

PRIME MINISTER HOSS RESIGNS

Prime Minister Selim Hoss again resigned on 7 June 1980, and again was asked to continue as caretaker. Relations between Hoss and President Sarkis had been deteriorating as Sarkis blamed Hoss for the failure to produce the much talked about 'government of reconciliation'. On 20 June Sarkis appointed Takieddin Solh as prime minister (Solh, aged 72, had already held the office of prime minister from July 1973 to September 1974), but he too was unable to form a cabinet and resigned on 9 August. Sarkis then nominated Shafik Wazzan, but he too met with difficulties and

therefore Lebanon was virtually without a government at a most critical period.

FALANGIST OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE NLP

After weeks of tension between Falangists and the NLP, suddenly on 7 July 1980 Gemayel's militia units launched a series of attacks against Chamoun's NLP militia in Beirut, along the northern coastline and in the mountains north of the capital. By the end of the day NLP militia resistance had collapsed. The Falangists had seized the NLP's offices in Beirut, many outlying NLP bases and positions in the Christian enclave, and quantities of NLP weaponry and ammunition, including some Israeli-provided tanks. Dany Chamoun's house in the coastal resort of Safra was burned down and his wife and daughter were briefly detained. It was later alleged that during this attack the Falangists had machine-gunned bathers in a swimming pool and then mutilated their bodies. Dany Chamoun said that two members of a family loyal to him had been tortured before they were killed. The Falangists hastily replied that they would punish any of their men found guilty of committing atrocities.

By the end of the day the Falangists dominated East Beirut and the northern Christian enclave, but had been unable to overcome the Zghorta Liberation Army militias and the Armenian Dashnak in Bourj Hamond and Camp Marash. Over 300 people had been killed and more than 500 injured: the estimates varied. Allegations of atrocity were made by both sides.

Previously, on 26 May, Franjieh's ZLA Marda militiamen had tried to drive the Falangists from several villages near Batroun on the coast, which had resulted in an inconclusive five-hour gun battle that left almost 20 dead.

On 8 July Dany Chamoun accused the Falangists of treachery and attempting to form a single Christian party. He declared he was leaving politics and would hand over command of the NLP militia to his elder brother, Dory, having previously resigned as secretary general of the NLP. After talks with Sulieman Franjieh and Walid Jumblatt on

the 13th, Dany Chamoun changed tack and announced he would move into Muslim West Beirut and continue the struggle against the Falangists from there.

FALANGIST POLICY

This offensive had been planned and executed by Bashir Gemayel, who had taken over command of the Falange Party militias. Gemayel envisaged the creation of a United Maronite Army, which would eventually liberate Lebanon from Palestinian occupation. He estimated that there were at least 400 000 Palestinians of one sort of another in Lebanon, and as a consequence about one million Lebanese had been displaced and about 500 000 had left the country. He knew that the Lebanese Muslims resented Christian political dominance, owing to their refusal to identity with Arabs, and that they suspected his inclination for peace and trade with Israel. He was probably a secret partitionist, visualising Lebanon becoming a successful Christian trading and economic entity, somewhat like Singapore, but he knew that Western support was essential for this dream and that France alone was not sufficiently influential to bring it about. Bashir Gemayel immediately began to form his militiamen into a more regimented National Guard, to be composed of the militias of all major Maronite parties.

Bashir Gemayel's official reason for launching this successful one-day operation against the NLP militia was to put an end to its racketeering and undisciplined behaviour. The real reason, or at least the immediate catalyst, was control of the small ports and harbours between Beirut and Tripoli, through which goods, produce and weaponry entered the Christian enclave, the customs duties being collected by the militias that currently dominated them. None of this money, nor the taxes imposed on towns and villages in the area, reached the Beirut treasury. Extracts from US intelligence reports, leaked to the Lebanese press, indicated that millions of dollars had been spent by the Falange Party on light and medium-sized arms from France, Britain and West Germany, and heavy weaponry from Israel. The Falange militias had also increased their number of

foreign advisers and technical experts, some of whom were Israelis.

One senior Muslim officer in the Lebanese army alleged that the Falangists had built up a highly motivated, well-trained armed body of about 6000 regulars and 9000 reservists (*Guardian*). The rumour prevailing at the time that the strength of the Falangist militia was in the region of 80 000 armed men, although not contradicted for propaganda purposes, should be discounted.

THE SHIA FACTOR

In September 1980 the Iran–Iraq War began, to continue for eight years. This war had a profound influence on certain political parties and militias in Lebanon, and upon the Lebanese Shia population, Iran being a Shia-majority country. The disappearance of Imam Sadr had left the Lebanese Shias without a vibrant leader, and the Amal movement, although gathering strength, was in danger of becoming fragmented by governments anxious to draw it into their exclusive control, or to rend it asunder.

During Imam Sadr's absence young pragmatic leaders had come to the fore, and in April 1980 an Amal general conference, sponsored by the Lebanese Shia Higher Communal Council (formed by Imam Sadr in 1969 and now headed by Mohammed Mahdi Shamseddin), elected a new 21-member Amal committee. Nabih Berri was appointed as secretary general, his main task being to bring about the return of the missing imam, whom many hoped was still alive, probably in Libyan captivity. The antagonism between Colonel Gaddafi of Libya and Imam Sadr (an Iranian) was a religious one. In Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini's 'new Islamic revolution' was to be uniquely Shia, while Gaddafi thought that it should be Sunni based. Hassan Hashem was appointed to lead the Amal militia. In reality, in Lebanon the two pro-Iraqi Sunni militias, the ALF and the Independent Baathists, were pitched against the Shia Amal in active confrontation.

ANOTHER FALANGE ATTACK: OCTOBER 1980

The Falangists' attempts to consolidate their dominance in East Beirut and the northern Christian enclave met with spasmodic Chamounist resistances, which led to minor clashes and several bomb explosions. On 25 October another large-scale Falangist offensive was launched against NLP positions in the Ain Rumaniyeh district of East Beirut, where remnants of the Chamounist NLP militias had gathered to form a pocket of resistance. A four-day battle ensued, involving tanks, guns, rockets and mortars. Up to a dozen people were killed. The fighting died down when the Falangists announced they had purged Ain Rumaniyeh, and that the 200 NLP defenders had fled into West Beirut (Radio Lebanon). During this bout of fighting the Lebanese army had made no move to defend the NLP militias – to the contrary, they had seemed to be helping the Falangists.

THE WAZZAN GOVERNMENT

Also on the 25th, Shafik Wazzan announced he had formed a 22-man cabinet of deputies and non-deputy technocrats, including 17 new members. However the cabinet was not expected to be able to bring about national reconciliation. Wazzan, a lawyer and president of the (Sunni) Islamic Council in Lebanon, was not a current deputy, but had been one from 1968–72. His first task was to deal with the fighting in Ain Rumaniyeh. He passed on the responsibility for this to the Higher Defence Council, which ordered disciplinary action against General Victor Khoury, Brigadier Mounir Tarabay and three other senior officers. This was seen as a means of countering criticism by the Lebanese Muslim community and the NDM militias of the Falangists take-over of Ain Rumaniyeh. The local media complained that the government had made the accused officers scapegoats for its own inability to deal with the situation.

The Falangist victory at Ain Rumaniyeh was a blow to President Sarkis and the army commanders who supported him. Bashir Gemayel stated that he would not allow the Lebanese army into his enclave until it had been fully

deployed in all Muslim areas of the country. He also announced that he was forming a new military body, to be called the 'Lebanese Forces'.

The Wazzan government failed to obtain a vote of confidence from the Chamber of Deputies until 20 December 1980, when 41 voted in favour and six against. (Only 48 deputies attended, 45 being absent and six seats being vacant.) A debarring hurdle had been Amal's demand that three prospective Shia ministers must withdraw: the hurdle was removed when they did so. Kamal Assad, the Shia speaker, retained his position but the new Wazzan government lacked Amal support.

VIOLENT ERUPTIONS

During 1980 a campaign of terrorism began to develop against journalists, both Western and local, involving death threats, bombing incidents, kidnapping and murder. Most of the extreme organisations seemed to be guilty of this at one time or other, although there was a good deal of anonymity. One of the first victims was Selim el-Lawzi, a Lebanese Christian based in London. He was owner and editor-in-chief of *al-Hawadess*, and was outspoken on Middle Eastern affairs and personalities. On returning to Lebanon to attend his mother's funeral el-Lawzi was kidnapped and his body was discovered on 24 February. He had been tortured before being killed: his right hand, the flesh eaten away by acid, had been symbolically rested on a typewriter.

In August a pro-Iraqi journalist was shot dead in Beirut and two Iraqi diplomats were killed in a bomb explosion, which resulted in clashes between Amal and the Baathist militia. There were also a series of clashes near Tripoli (from the 20th to the 24th) between pro-Syrian and anti-Syrian groups, reflecting the power struggle currently in progress in Syria between the pan-Arab Muslim Brotherhood and the Alawite Syrian government. The ADF intervened and bombarded the city of Tyre on several occasions before the fighting died down. Lebanon was developing as a proxy battlefield for other countries.

On 5 November 1980 fighting broke out in several parts of West Beirut between the Mourabitoun and the Syrian-

backed Syrian Popular Socialist Party, both of which were within Jumblatt's NDM. This began with a traffic accident and a right-of-way argument, in which Mounir Fatha, a Mourabitoun leader, was shot dead by Bashir Obeid, a senior SPSP official. During the following month, several hundred Shias from the south again demonstrated in Beirut, attacking a UN building, ransacking offices and burning documents before being dispersed by the ADF.

In the latter part of December the Falangists tried to expand their domination into Zahle, a northern Christian town on the Beirut–Damascus highway with a mainly Greek Orthodox population of about 100 000. Two Christian groups clashed with each other in Zahle on the 19th, their respective militias battling on the streets. A ceasefire was arranged but fighting recommenced on the 21st, whereupon the ADF intervened and brought about another ceasefire. Then a Christian-fired rocket-propelled grenade hit a Syrian vehicle, killing five soldiers. The Syrians demanded the surrender of the culprits, and when this was refused the ADF surrounded Zahle. Falangist and Greek Orthodox militias resumed their battle. Another ceasefire was arranged, but broke down when the ADF demanded that the Falangists withdraw from the city and allow the ADF to maintain order, which they refused to do. Then the ADF found the body of one of its soldiers who had been shot by Christians. Mediation persuaded the Falangists to withdraw from Zahle, and on the 26th the Syrians lifted their siege of that city.

JANUARY–MARCH 1981

During the first three months of 1981 the situation remained tense in Beirut and the northern Christian enclave, punctuated by numerous incidents. Indiscriminate sniping across the Green Line caused several deaths, and shots from passing vehicles became commonplace – several VIPs had narrow escapes, including the US ambassador. On 21 March a bomb was found (but dismantled in time) on the car of Rashid Karami, a former prime minister. Beirut remained a very dangerous place.

SIEGE OF ZAHLE: APRIL–JUNE 1981

Having been rebuffed in their attempt to take control of Zahle in December 1980, the Falangists tried again at the beginning of April 1981 and moved into the town in some strength. Once again there was fighting in the streets between Christian militias, and once again (on 2 April) Syrian ADF troops, said to number 2600, surrounded Zahle and set about bombarding the town. The Falangists replied in kind.

The Syrian commander of the ADF announced that his troops had moved to evict the Falangists from Zahle as it was vital to Syrian security to prevent the construction of a road linking Zahle with the Mount Lebanon district to the south, which would enable Falangists in the north and centre, in conjunction with Haddad's militia in the south, to make a pincer movement against this strategic town. In any case Syria certainly did not want a Falangist-held Zahle bastion blocking the main highway from Damascus, Zahle being only ten miles from the Syrian border. The Syrian bombardment had been launched in response to a Falangist attempt to size control of a key bridge just outside the town.

On the 7th firing slackened and a convoy with relief supplies was allowed into the town. The following day Abdul Halim Khaddam, the Syrian foreign minister, arrived in Beirut, having been sent by President Assad to present to President Sarkis his terms for a ceasefire at Zahle: that the Falangist militia withdraw from Zahle and the surrounding hills; that responsibility for security in Zahle be taken over by the Lebanese army, under command of the ADF; and that the 'red line' be regarded as the southern limit of the ADF's area of control.

These terms were rejected by Bashir Gemayel, the Falange militia leader, who said he would continue to fight for the liberation of Lebanon and the ejection of the Syrians. The bombardments were resumed, despite protests from the United States and Israel (the Falangists were depicting the scene as a Syrian massacre of Christians). There was a brief respite on the 9th to allow a Red Cross convoy to enter Zahle to evacuate the wounded. On the 13th the Syrians tightened the siege. Mediation attempts were handicapped

by confirmation by Bashir Gemayel on the 14th that Israel was supplying him with military aid. Two days later he added that he would accept military aid from anyone and there was no doubt that he had already been supplied with some aircraft by certain unnamed Arab states.

A tentative peace agreement was reached on 24 April, arranged by Colonel Mohammed Ghanem (the Syrian ADF intelligence chief), Joseph Skaff (the Lebanese defence minister and a Greek Catholic) and another Lebanese minister, Elias Hrawi (a Maronite – both Skaff and Hrawi were from Zahle). The plan was to effect a ceasefire to allow units of the Lebanese army to enter Zahle and the private militias to be removed, but nothing happened and shelling by both sides continued day after day.

Tension suddenly heightened on 28 April when Israeli combat aircraft shot down two Syrian helicopters involved in the Siege of Zahle. The following day the Syrians moved a number of SAM-6 anti-aircraft missiles into the Bekaa Valley, now controlled by the ADF, and the so-called 'Bekaa Valley Missile Crisis' began, which involved American mediation.

The siege of Zahle continued throughout May, and although the main fighting moved to the surrounding hills, spasmodic shelling and sniping continued in the town. By the time it reached its formal end on 30 June at least 200 had died, several because of the lack of medical supplies, and some 500 may have been injured – the estimates varied. Zahle was without electricity, water was only available twice a week and epidemics had begun to break out. The ceasefire negotiations had stumbled over the ADF's refusal to allow Lebanese army units into Zahle, and the Falangists' refusal to renounce their links with Israel.

The conditions of the ceasefire plan, rather than agreement, put forward by the Arab League Mediation Committee included the evacuation of the Falange militia and confiscation of its weaponry, the closure of Falange offices and training centres in Zahle, and the introduction of Lebanese police into the town. Most of the Falange militia had already been driven out, so the strength of the besieging ADF was quickly scaled down, leaving checkpoints around Zahle to prevent the Falangists from returning.

THE PATTERN OF VIOLENCE

In Beirut, violence developed along the Green Line, where crossing points were restricted by sniper fire and were frequently closed. There were also ADF attacks on Christian areas, bouts of militia infighting and indiscriminate bombardments. On 2 April, for example, the ADF launched a heavy bombardment on East Beirut that lasted several hours, an act that was repeated periodically. On the 20th, for the first time since 1977 Beirut international airport, in the Western sector, was closed when it came under Christian militia shelling. It remained closed until 13 May. On 22 April pro-Iranian and pro-Iraqi militias attacked each other, and in their all-day battle in Beirut, according to local estimates, over 40 people were killed and more than 100 injured. On the 26th the NDM militias launched a mortar attack on Junieh.

Another incident with heavy casualties occurred on 31 May, when elements of the NDM and the PLO shelled crowded beaches in Kaslik in East Beirut. The Christian response was to shell beaches in West Beirut, local press estimates being that about 30 people were killed and almost 300 injured. To this was added political and criminal violence in the form of assassinations and the bombing of buildings – many old scores were paid off.

LIBYAN TROOPS IN LEBANON

On 23 May 1981 Israel claimed that hundreds of Libyan troops with anti-aircraft weapons and rocket launchers had entered Lebanon, and that on the 28th Israeli planes had destroyed these weapons, which had been deployed just south of Beirut in defence of PLO positions. US intelligence sources estimated there were about 150 Libyan troops in Lebanon, the Libyan government referring to them as 'volunteers'. Arafat confirmed there had been Libyans serving with the PLO since 1972, that about 300 specialised Libyan troops were serving with the Mourabitoun, and that Libyans and Libyan weaponry had been used to attack Junieh on 26 April. Later (13 August) the Lebanese government

accepted in principle a Libyan offer to provide an air defence system against Israeli attacks.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT

The now frequent Israeli air strikes against Lebanese targets were causing considerable damage to the infrastructure in that many roads and river bridges were damaged, and some destroyed, especially along the coastal highway. Israeli 'economic bombing' was also hitting Lebanon hard, one example being attacks on the oil refinery at Zahrani, the second largest in the country and normally supplying up to 40 per cent of the nation's requirements. Damage to this oil installation caused a shortage of engine fuel, and as a consequence there were interruptions in the water supplied by diesel-powered pumping stations.

In June 1981 Franjieh supporters hijacked several fully loaded petrol tankers travelling by road from the Tripoli oil refinery to Beirut. Their aims were to prevent the fuel from being used by the Falangists and to obtain a supply for themselves, claiming it was for the construction of a nationally approved major cement factory. In riposte the Falangists turned back trucks carrying flour to the Franjieh region. Fights often occurred at petrol filling stations between drivers demanding petrol, regardless of limited quantities available, and indeed some petrol stations were bombed in frustrated anger that month.

Rather surprisingly, despite the steady deterioration of internal security since 1977 the Lebanese currency maintained its value, and in fact between 1976 and 1979 five new banks were established in Beirut. This was largely because the Central Bank of Lebanon had maintained the country's gold and foreign currency reserves at their 1975 level, and the balance of payments had remained in substantial surplus.

One of the chief sources of revenue in Lebanon were remittances from Lebanese working abroad, their cash inflow being estimated at about $150 million a month during 1981, which enabled the country to pay for about 85 per cent of its essential imports. Industry had been most affected by

the adverse internal situation, and by mid 1981 was about 30 per cent below its 1975 level, with the rationing of electricity and the fuel shortage further reducing the industrial capacity. An expression in common usage at the time was that the indomitable Lebanese commercial initiative was a 'palliative for peace'.

The one production area that benefited from the chaotic, lawless internal situation was the illegal growing and processing of hashish, which involved the cooperation of many groups, some in conflict with each other. Before the 1975–76 civil war hashish plants had taken up about 10 per cent of cultivated land in the Bekaa Valley, yielding an average harvest of about 100 tons. By 1981 it was estimated that the harvest had risen to 2000 tons, yielding an annual revenue to the government of about $500 million, providing finance for maintenance of the regional superstructure (*Financial Times*).

NEW PARTIES AND MILITIAS APPEAR

In June 1981 Abdul Halim Khaddam, the Syrian foreign minister, put forward a peace plan (to be discussed by the Arab League) based on the Lebanese forming a National Salvation government, to consist of six ministers drawn from the major sects, but this was another non-starter, mainly because the Falangists refused to discard their Israeli military advisers. In July the Syrians introduced a completely new militia to the Lebanese scene the latest militia count was already over 40 (Radio Lebanon) – as a means of retaining Syrian influence should the ADF be withdrawn. The new militia, which was known officially as the Fursin al Uruba and informally known as the Arab Cavalry, owed its loyalty to General Rifat Assad, brother of the president and head of the Syrian security service. Some of its units were sent to Tripoli, where they became involved in the Sunni–Alawite feud.

On 4–5 August there was a bout of fighting in Tripoli between the recently formed pro-Syrian Arab Democratic Party (ADP) and the pro-Iraqi ALF. A ceasefire was soon broken, and the ADF had to rush to the aid of the ADP.

This clash left over 30 dead and more than 50 injured. At least 15 political groups with their own militias were known to have offices in Tripoli, as well as some Palestinian ones (Radio Lebanon). Fighting also broke out in southern Lebanon between the pro-Moscow Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) and Amal, both of which recruited amongst the southern Shias, their argument being over membership piracy, while in Beirut Amal clashed with another new group, the Organisation of Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL).

In September in East Beirut the French ambassador was shot dead, responsibility being claimed by the Lebanese Red Brigades, who were believed to be pro-Iranian. France had just given political asylum to the fleeing former Iranian president, Abdol Bani-Sadr. In October a series of bomb attacks were made against Syrian and PLO offices in West Beirut, causing the death of over 100 people. Responsibility was claimed by the Front for the Liberation of Lebanon from Foreigners (FLLF), which had previously attacked the US ambassador. Arafat accused the FLLF of breaking the 24 July ceasefire agreement.

A combined attempt was made by the ADP, the PLO, Amal and Jumblatt's NDM militias to crack down on violence. Proclamation notices were posted in streets and public places, demanding that no weapons be carried, nor military uniforms worn, nor military vehicles used on the streets, and that all barricades and checkpoints should be removed. The ADP set up concrete roadblocks and destroyed several militia roadside strong points. Initially this had a beneficial effect, but it was limited and did not last for long, as the instigators were themselves were at odds with each other.

In November in Beirut, Tahsein al-Atrash, leader of the Lebanese Baath Party, was shot dead, and on 15 December a huge bomb explosion at the Iraqi embassy killed over 60 people, including the ambassador, and injured over 100 others, after which several diplomatic missions withdrew their staff. One authority (*Liberation*) calculated that in excess of 2000 people had died violently in Lebanon during 1981, and over 6000 had been injured. No one contradicted this assessment.

MAJOR HADDAD

Meanwhile, on 6 November in southern Lebanon Major Haddad resigned as commander of the Christian enclave. His official reason was exhaustion, but it was probably because he was irked by the restrictions imposed on him by the 24 July ceasefire. He rescinded his decision two days later under pressure from his soldiers and the inhabitants of the enclave, both Christian and Muslim, who saw him as their sole defender against the Palestinian militias. This strengthened his position.

When three of his men were killed by a mine on the 13th, Haddad declared the 24 July ceasefire to be at an end. He sent his troops into the UNIFIL area, laid siege to the UN HQ in Nakoura, blocked off roads and severed the UNIFIL water supply. Haddad claimed that UNIFIL was allowing Palestinian guerrillas to penetrate southwards. He lifted the siege a few days later, allegedly on humanitarian grounds. When more of his men were killed by landmines, supposedly laid by Palestinian infiltrators, on 6 December he sent a strong detachment with Israeli-supplied tanks to occupy a prominent geological feature on an infiltration route: Hill 880, which overlooked the Litani River and beyond. After UN protests he replaced the Israeli tanks by smaller armoured vehicles, but his detachment remained in occupation.

BEIRUT: INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST BASE

On 2 January 1982 an oil tanker taking on Iraqi crude oil at the Tripoli terminal was shelled and set on fire, and the following day the pipeline carrying Iraqi oil to the port was blown up. Pro-Iranian militias were suspected. The pipeline had only been opened a week previously, after being inoperative for six years. This was a big blow to the Lebanese economy.

Meanwhile Beirut was increasingly becoming a base for international terrorism, hijacking and hostage taking – spectacular incidents that kept Western governments on their toes for several years and provided headlines and

TV viewing for millions of people throughout the world. One of these incidents occurred on 24 February, when a hijacked Kuwaiti airliner landed at Beirut airport. The Shia hijackers, who called themselves the 'Sons of Imam Musa Sadr', subsequently surrendered to the Lebanese army. This was said to be the eighth hijack attempt aimed at gaining the release of the missing Shia religious leader.

The events in first six months of 1982 were much the same as usual: fighting between rival militias, indiscriminate bombings, kidnappings and assassinations, and much spilling of blood. New factions entered the fray. It was also a period of unreliable intelligence as to who was who, and who was doing what to whom. One of the biggest surprises was the development of Amal, which under Nabih Berri became the largest Lebanese militia, reaching a strength of about 30 000, overshadowing that of the Christian Falange Party. In February the strength of UNIFIL personnel was increased from about 6000 to 7000.

ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON

On 6 June 1982 Israel launched a punitive military operation (Operation Peace in Galilee), basically to eliminate the PLO threat from Lebanon and force Palestinian guerrillas back some 30 miles or so (originally quoted as 40 km and then increased to 45 km), beyond the range where their mortars and rockets could fall on Israeli settlements. The operation seemed to be favourably endorsed by President Reagan of the United States, the Soviets claiming that Reagan had foreknowledge of it. It was a three-pronged assault by a 90 000-strong invasion force, combining armour, infantry and artillery, with substantial air and naval support.

The main column moved northwards along the coastal road, successively overrunning PLO positions near Tyre, Sidon and Damour and meeting considerable Palestinian resistance. The first Israeli clash with the ADF was during their seizure of Jezzine on the 7th. Once across the Awali river, on the 8th the column moved inland to encircle West Beirut and to reach the Beirut–Damascus highway. The second column, in the centre, moved northwards from Metulla

in Israel. It passed through UNIFIL areas without resistance and occupied Beaufort Castle, then took Nabatiyeh and pushed northwards. The third column, in the east, moved from the Golan Heights to penetrate the Arkoub region (Fatahland).

The Israeli and Syrian air forces clashed over eastern Lebanon on the 8th and 9th. The Syrians were disastrously defeated: Israel claimed to have shot down 60 Syrian aircraft with the loss of only one of its own – Syria remained silent about this episode. Syrian SAM missiles in the Bekaa Valley were eliminated, and Israeli aircraft dominated the skies for the rest of this campaign.

The advancing Israeli troops halted on the 11th, to find PLO forces strongly entrenched in the southern suburbs of Beirut. The Lebanese government appealed unsuccessfully for international help to achieve a lasting truce in the fighting. On the 12th there was heavy fighting in the Beirut area, and by the 14th Israeli armoured columns had encircled the main PLO positions in South Beirut and made contact with Christian militias in East Beirut. The following day they reached the Beirut–Damascus highway, thus severing PLO and Syrian communication eastwards. The Syrians had agreed to a US-brokered ceasefire as the Israeli forces approached the highway, but it had only lasted for a few hours. A large Syrian ADF detachment was besieged, as well as PLO units. A UN resolution proposed by France on the 15th, calling for the withdrawal of all Palestinians and Israelis from Lebanon, was approved by 14 members of the Security Council but was vetoed by the United States.

THE SIEGE OF WEST BEIRUT

The Israeli siege and bombardment of West Beirut continued. Leaflets were dropped urging civilians to leave and Palestinians to lay down their arms. Now trapped within the Israeli encirclement, Arafat and other PLO leaders said they would fight on. A 48-hour truce, beginning on 17 June 1982, was observed by the Israelis while Prime Minister Begin visited President Reagan in Washington, but

the Israeli offensive was resumed on the 18th. Their tanks reached the Green Line, thus drawing the besieging ring more tightly around the Syrian and PLO detachments. A further Israeli three-day thrust began on 20 June. They managed to seize a strategic section of the highway, reaching as far east as Bhamdoun (some 15 miles from Beirut), thus blocking any projected Syrian relief operation.

US nationals were warned by their embassy to leave Beirut, and many were evacuated by way of Junieh. By that time Israel's conditions for lifting the siege and allowing the Syrians and PLO to leave included all PLO and Syrian armed forces being withdrawn from Lebanon, together with a guarantee that the PLO would not return; a large buffer area in the south being demilitarised and manned by a UN peacekeeping force; and the restoration of a strong Lebanese government to make a peace treaty with Israel.

The siege and negotiations continued. In the United States a significant event was the resignation of Secretary of State Alexander Haigh, who was considered too sympathetic towards Israel, and his replacement by George Shultz, who wanted to strengthen Arab–US ties.

On 3 July the Israelis tightened their siege of West Beirut. They cut off the water and electricity supplies and restricted the entry of fuel, food and medical items. Both sides were guilty of ceasefire violations. The Israelis continued their spasmodic shelling, launching particularly heavy barrages between the 9th and the 12th, on the 22nd, and again on 12 August.

Meanwhile the United States was working on an evacuation plan, which was agreed to by Syria on 7 August, the Lebanese government and the PLO on the 18th, the Israeli cabinet on the 19th and President Reagan on the 20th. Israel refused to sign the document, saying that it only applied to the Syrian and PLO units trapped in West Beirut. The evacuation of these units from West Beirut by sea and road began on 21 August, the day that French peacekeeping troops landed in Lebanon, followed by US marines on the 25th. Arafat left for Greece on the 30th (after 73 days under Israeli siege), to be greeted by the Greek prime minister, who reiterated his support for the Palestinian cause.

The PLO HQ moved to Tunis and the PLO armed militias were widely scattered to Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Yemen, although some remained in Greece and Cyprus. Many Palestinians not actually involved in the siege remained in Lebanon, keeping a low profile for the moment. The Syrian ADF troops quietly returned homewards along the Beirut–Damascus highway. On the 31st the Israelis shot down a Syrian plane.

The estimates of the number of casualties caused by this Israeli invasion and the 73-day siege of West Beirut were conflicting and imprecise. The Lebanese government estimated that 17 825 people had died in the conflict, including Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese civilians. A later Red Cross estimate put the number of displaced persons at over 30 000. Israel admitted that 318 Israeli servicemen had been killed, nearly 2000 were wounded, five were missing and eleven had been captured by either Palestinians or Syrians (various IDF press releases). Later Israel claimed that its troops had killed about 1000 Palestinian guerrillas and captured about 6000, some of whom were classed as terrorists so would not be subject to normal Geneva Convention rules of treatment and exchanged as prisoners of war. For a while the Israeli army continued to occupy a large part of Lebanon.

7 Mutual Enemies: 1982–83

After the dramatic exit of the PLO armed forces from Beirut in the last days of August 1982, the Israeli invasion force set about expanding its domination over Lebanese territory. On 3 September Israeli units moved northwards into West Beirut, where – according to the Israeli defence minister, Ariel Sharon – some 2000 Palestinian guerrillas remained in hiding. However in response to US pressure they pulled back on the 7th, in conformity with President Reagan's so-called New Middle East Peace Plan (agreed on the 1st), which meant little more than persuading the leaders to talk to each other and follow the United States' suggestions. The impromptu international peacekeeping force – initiated by Reagan on 6 July to assist with the evacuation of Palestinian militias from Beirut, and consisting of US, French and Italian detachments – had withdrawn from Lebanon by 12 September.

Previously, on the 4th, the PLO had captured eight Israeli soldiers manning a post near Bhamdoun. On the same day fighting had broken out between Lebanese army units and National Democratic Movement militias along the Green Line, where a departing French ammunition truck was blown up. On the 12th Israeli aircraft attacked Syrian missile positions in the Bekaa Valley, and the following day Israel launched a series of heavy air strikes against Syrian and PLO positions in eastern Lebanon, the stated reason being that Palestinian guerrillas based behind the Syrian lines were making hit and run raids against Israeli targets.

PRESIDENT-ELECT BASHIR GEMAYEL

Meanwhile, despite the chaos and major upset caused to the Lebanese government by the Israeli invasion, its seeming lack of authority and the inactivity of the Lebanese army while Arafat and his Palestinian militiamen fought back against the invaders, on 23 August 1982 the Chamber of Deputies met according to schedule to elect a successor

to President Sarkis. They met in a military building as the National Assembly was considered too dangerous. It had been agreed that a minimum presence of 62 deputies would be required for this session. Many Muslim deputies stayed away in the hope that this quorum would not be reached and the session would have to be cancelled. However the required number was achieved exactly and Bashir Gemayel gained 57 votes, there having been five abstentions.

Bashir, a lawyer by training, was the younger son of Pierre Gemayel, the Falangist leader, who had served with the Falangist militia in 1975–76, gaining a reputation for military capability and ruthlessness. He was opposed by Lebanese Muslims, NDM militias and Sulieman Franjieh, whose son Tony had reputedly been killed by the Falange. Bashir's appointment was welcomed by most Christian factions and Israel, and he was said to have good relations with the United States and Syria. Most spokesmen from the Arab states declined to express an opinion on the appointment, saying it was a Lebanese internal matter.

The new president-elect declared that he would work for a national consensus, but on 14 September he was killed by a huge bomb explosion at the Falangist HQ in Beirut, some 60 others perishing with him. No one claimed responsibility, but speculation was rife and some fingers pointed at the Franjieh clan.

Another Chamber of Deputies session was held on 21 September to elect a successor. Amin Gemayel, Pierre's elder son, was elected president by 77 votes out of 80. Regarded as a moderate, Amin was more acceptable to Muslims than his brother Bashir as he had been more active politically than militarily. He had maintained contact with Muslim leaders during the 1975–76 civil war and was not hampered by links with Israel. Amin Gemayel was sworn in as president on the 23rd, when he declared he would work to achieve a strong, independent Lebanon, free of foreign armies. He received a friendly telegram of congratulations from President Assad of Syria. President Amin Gemayel reappointed Shafik Wazzan as prime minister, and the latter chose nine new non-deputy members to serve in his ten-man cabinet.

SHATILA AND SABRA

Meanwhile, on 15 September 1982, anticipating trouble after the death of Bashir Gemayel, Israeli troops pushed forward into West Beirut, supported by artillery fire and a naval bombardment. They met pockets of Palestinian resistance, but by the end of the next day they had occupied, in conjunction with the Falange militia, most of the Muslim sector and had established positions around the Shatila and Sabra Palestinian refugee camps, which were adjacent to each other. The Israelis said they would not withdraw from these positions until the Lebanese army was ready to take over from them and keep order. On the 16th Prime Minister Wazzan appealed to President Reagan to secure an Israeli military evacuation from Beirut.

On the morning of 17 September it became known that 'armed men' had entered the Shatila and Sabra refugee camps and were engaged in wholesale massacre of the inmates, including women and children. This was confirmed on the 18th, when relief workers and journalists were allowed into the camps. Witnesses spoke of hundreds of bodies, some mutilated. Many houses had been blown up with their occupants inside them, their bodies being bulldozed into the rubble, and there was a mass grave in one camp. Estimates of the death toll varied considerably.

Once the full horror became apparent, questions arose as to who was to blame, and who the 'armed men' were. The Israeli army was in control of the area at the time, and Falange militias had access to the camps, but both Israeli and Falangist leaders denied any complicity. Wild rumours and speculation put the blame first on one side and then the other. Despite several high-level enquiries, official responsibility for the massacres remains unresolved. Israel pointed its finger at Elie Hobeika, a Falangist military leader: there are many who agree.

Regarding the number killed in Shatila and Shabra, on 11 October the Lebanese government stated it was 328, and that 991 were 'missing presumed dead', while on 8 February 1983 an Israeli official enquiry accepted its own military intelligence estimate that the death toll in the two camps was between 700 and 800. No one was exactly sure.

THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE

On 20 September 1982 the Lebanese government suggested that a US, French and Italian peacekeeping force should be deployed in Beirut to maintain order. President Reagan agreed, and the multinational force (MNF) came into being. French paratroops arrived in Beirut on the 24th, and Italians on the 27th. A joint French–Italian detachment entered the Shatila and Sabra camps to assume responsibility for security, while US marines landed at Beirut airport on the 29th. The MNF quickly increased in strength to 1500 French, 1200 American and 600 Italian troops, to which about 600 British ones were added later. The French detachment assumed responsibility for northern Beirut, the Italians for the centre of the city and the Americans for the southern Muslim outskirts. The first MNF casualty was a US marine, killed while defusing a US-made cluster bomb at the airport.

In the Bekaa Valley on the 28th, Saad Sayel (Abu Walid), the PLO chief-of-staff, was ambushed by Israelis and killed. He had been inspecting PLO troops, based behind the Syrian lines. On 3 October six Israelis were killed when their vehicle was ambushed near Aley.

THE LEBANESE ARMY REGAINS CONTROL

In early October the Lebanese army came into action, and from the 5th to the 14th carried out an intensive security sweep of West Beirut, with some assistance from Israeli forces. Many suspected Palestinian militiamen were detained and huge quantities of arms and ammunition were confiscated. On the 15th the army switched its attention to East Beirut, where it also made arrests and confiscated stocks of arms, but did not disarm the Christian militias.

On the 18th the Lebanese army turned its attention to the Chouf region, where serious fighting between Christian and Druse militias had developed while attention had been focused on Beirut. The army managed to reassert its presence in the region, but could not stop the fighting. Israel too had a military presence in part of the Chouf,

which restricted Lebanese army activity. The Lebanese government estimated that 19 085 non-Israelis had been killed since their invasion of 1982, it being explained that this higher estimate was due to more bodies being found during the Beirut security sweeps. Israel said this estimate was much too high, and that up to the end of 1982, 450 had been killed and 2434 wounded, while five were still missing and eleven held captive: but there were later adjustments to these figures.

In November the Druse–Christian militia conflict in the Chouf spread into the southern suburbs of Beirut. The friction increased on 1 December when a car-bomb explosion in Beirut killed four Druse and injured Walid Jumblatt, the Druse leader.

UNIFIL SUFFERS CASUALTIES

Israel claimed that up to 3000 PLO fighters had been redeployed to the Bekaa Valley, having been evacuated by way of the Beirut–Damascus highway, and that a lengthy war of attrition – with no political solution – was in sight. In southern Lebanon UNIFIL continued to suffer casualties at the hands of Haddad's militia and Palestinians who had infiltrated back into the region: three UN soldiers were killed on 27 October, bringing the UNIFIL death toll since 1978 to 86.

President Amin Gemayel visited the United States in October. He addressed both the UN Security Council and the General Assembly, and during a meeting with President Reagan he called for the Israelis, Palestinians and Syrians to withdraw from Lebanon, and for the strength of the MNF to be increased.

US-sponsored Lebanese–Israeli talks began on 28 December. They were held concurrently in two separate places – Kalde (Lebanon), which had been heavily bombarded by the Israelis during their invasion, and Kiryat Shimona (Israel), which had been subjected to spasmodic PLO rocket fire – but the negotiations soon stalled.

On 9 November the new Wazzan government was voted emergency powers to rule by decree for a six-month period

in matters of security, defence, economic development, reconstruction and legal and administrative reform.

THE LEBANESE ARMY

In December 1982 it was announced that General Ibrahim Tannous was to be the Lebanese army commander. The United States had agreed in a $50 million package deal to supply the Lebanese army with weaponry, including 36 M-48 tanks, 155 mm guns and armoured personnel carriers, and also to send a team of US special forces (Green Berets) to help with training.

The fighting element of the Lebanese army was to be formed into seven brigades. In theory these were to be non-sectarian, but in practice the opposite was true, for example the 5th Brigade was predominantly Christian, the 6th predominantly Muslim and the 7th predominantly Druse. There was boastful talk of expanding the Lebanese army, with overoptimistic estimates of it reaching a strength of about 60 000 by 1983 and even 100 000 by 1985.

On 20 December fighting broke out in the Druse town of Aley between Falange and Druse militias. At least 20 people were killed and old enmities were rearoused. The fighting rumbled on until 7 February 1983, when the Druse drove most of the Falangists from the town.

After several months of negotiations between the Lebanese government and the Falangists, the Lebanese army was deployed in Beirut for the first time since the 1975–76 civil war (previous military sweeps had not entailed a permanent presence). It was also agreed that the Falange militia could retain its arms, but should not carry them in public. In fact all the Falange's heavy weapons, including tanks and guns, had been moved out of Beirut into the northern Christian area.

The Lebanese government issued a decree on 6 March 1983 against illegal imports, again ordering the closure of all 'private' ports, which included the notorious 'Dock Five' in the Beirut port area, operated solely by the Falangists since the civil war and a rich source of income. This was a peaceful takeover as the Falangists' relationship with their

former ally, Israel, had become strained and they did not want to provoke Israel too much at this stage. Relations of convenience were changing. President Amin Gemayel refused to enter into a peace treaty with Israel, and the Falangist radio station, Voice of Lebanon, was now referring to the Israelis as 'foreign occupiers'. On 31 March 1983 President Gemayel issued a decree dissolving the ADF's mandate, but this did not mean that the some 30 000 Syrian troops already in Lebanon would leave the country.

MNF PROBLEMS

During February and March 1983 the MNF became the focus of a series of attacks. For example two French soldiers were wounded when a jogging party was attacked in Beirut, an Italian soldier was wounded when his patrol was fired on near the airport, and five US marines were wounded by a grenade assault. The culprits were thought to be pro-Iranian elements being trained in the Bekaa Valley.

There were also clashes between the MNF and Israeli troops, for instance on 2 February when Israelis tried to force their way into the US zone. There was also controversy over the Israeli practice of 'reconnaissance by fire', where Israelis fired indiscriminately into any area where there might be an enemy, a tactic used along the road between Sidon and Beirut, parts of which briefly became a 'free-fire zone'.

In February there was a severe blizzard in the mountains of eastern Lebanon in an area controlled by Syrian troops, in which over 80 people died, some 20 of whom were Syrian soldiers. By special arrangement US helicopters flew across battle zones to take relief to Christian villages in the disaster area, which gained hardly any press coverage.

On 18 April a suicide bomber drove a van loaded with explosives into the wall of the US embassy in Beirut. The explosion killed over 60 people, including Robert Ames, a senior CIA director, and six CIA personnel. Responsibility was claimed by al-Jihad al-Islami, an Iranian-backed group based in the Bekaa Valley. The saga of suicide bombings in Lebanon had begun.

HADDAD'S REGION EXPANDS

During February, with Israeli military support, Major Haddad expanded his autonomous region to include the town of Sidon. It then spread eastwards to Jeb Jenine, which meant that Haddad now controlled the area that Israel was demanding should be demilitarised in the withdrawal negotiations. The following month Israelis began to conduct a census in the villages in Haddad's area, the official reason being to establish civilian units to administer villagers' welfare. The IDF was already collecting taxes from southern villages to pay for the upkeep of Haddad's militia, currently reported to be 1200 strong.

A TRIPOLI ARRANGEMENT

Factional fighting raged in Tripoli during December 1982 and again in January 1983 between the Syrian-backed, pro-Alawite Arab Democratic Party, assisted by Syrian paratroops, and what became known as the 'October 24 Movement', formerly the Sunni Popular Resistance Movement. The skirmishes consisted mainly of artillery duels and street fighting, during which almost 170 people were killed and some 20 000 had to abandon their homes.

On 8 January an agreement was reached between Prime Minister Wazzan and President Assad of Syria for each of the rival groups to pull back from the battlefield. The centre of Tripoli would be patrolled by the Lebanese Internal Security Forces, meaning gendarmes and civil police. Once approved by a Tripoli committee, headed by former Prime Minister Rashid Karami, this was effected on the 10th, whereupon the tension subsided.

THE WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

On 17 May 1983, after months of tedious US-sponsored negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, representatives of the three countries signed what became known as the Withdrawal Agreement, which provided for the evacuation

of Israeli armed forces from Lebanon, the ending of a state of war between Lebanon and Israel, and the establishment of a security region in southern Lebanon to prevent further infiltration by Palestinians.

A confidential US–Israeli agreement was signed in Washington about the same time, under which, it was believed, the United States agreed to Israeli armed forces remaining in Lebanon until all Israeli POWs had been repatriated and all Syrian and PLO forces withdrawn: in other words, Israel would be last out.

Implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement depended entirely upon Syrian cooperation. However Syria rejected it, and on the 17th blocked off both the Beirut–Damascus and the Beirut–Tripoli roads, as well as severing all telex and telephone communications between Beirut and Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon. Many Lebanese were not in favour of the agreement either, and on the 14th several Lebanese opposition leaders, including Sulieman Franjieh, Rashid Karami and Walid Jumblatt, had met in Zghorta to discuss political strategy.

Syria's stance remained hostile to Israel, and in early January 1983, supported by the Soviet Union, Syria installed in the Bekaa Valley a number of Soviet SAM-5s. The largest weapon of its type, the SAM-5 had a range of up to 150 miles and could reach deep into Israel. Relations between Syria and Israel deteriorated steadily, and in April both countries placed their armed forces on high alert. In mid May Syria moved about 1000 fresh troops into Lebanon and massed others near its border with Israel. On the 18th the Syrian government refused to received Philip Habib, President Reagan's special envoy; nor did it wish to be involved in the US-sponsored Withdrawal Agreement negotiations, which accordingly rested upon negative assumptions.

Israeli occupation troops continued to be harassed, and each time they were attacked they responded. For example on 30 May two Israeli soldiers were killed near Bhamdoun, whereupon the Israelis made large-scale arrests and confined the detainees in the Ansar detention camp in southern Lebanon. Israel was criticised by the Red Cross for inhumane treatment of the some 5000 inmates. Serious

rioting occurred in the Ansar camp in mid June and several guards were injured.

In Tyre, two Israeli soldiers were killed by a car bomb and three were shot dead in an ambush in a nearby village, after which Israeli troops blockaded the village for several days. On the 16th a gun battle erupted at an Israeli checkpoint and seven Israeli soldiers were killed. A general strike took place on 6 June in West Beirut, Tyre, Sidon and Tripoli.

Fighting resumed in Tripoli between rival militias. This involved the abduction of several Syrian troops and eventually caused (on 28 July) the Syrian detachment to withdraw suddenly from the city to the surrounding hills, without consulting either the Lebanese government or the local militias. As the Syrian troops departed from the city, fighting was resumed between the Islamic Unification Movement, which had formerly fought against the Syrians but had recently allied itself with them against the anti-Syrian October 24 Movement. Lebanese government mediation caused the fighting to subside somewhat, but a few days later it broke out again after a bomb explosion outside a mosque killed about 20 people, including women and children. Another bomb exploded on the 20th at the offices of the October 24 Movement, also killing about 20 people.

In the east a massive car bomb exploded on 7 August in Syrian-controlled Baalbek, killing about 30 people and injuring nearly 40. Responsibility was claimed by the Front for the Liberation of Lebanon from Foreigners (FLLF), a Christian organisation.

CHOUF: MAY–AUGUST 1983

On 22 May 1983 a number of clashes occurred in the Chouf mountains, south-east of Beirut, as Druse moved to expel Falangists who had occupied positions in the area in the wake of the Israeli invasion. Several people were killed and many more injured. Over 100 were captured by the Druse, including the Maronite bishop of Tyre. IDF detachments in the Chouf made no attempt to interfere on behalf of the Christians. This outburst of factional hatred died down

after a couple of days when the Druse released some of their prisoners, including the bishop. This was said to be the result of personal intervention by President Gemayel.

The first clash between the Druse and the Lebanese army, which was planning to impose its authority on the Chouf region, occurred on 14 July when an army detachment accompanying an Israeli patrol was ambushed by the Druse militia. Fourteen Lebanese soldiers and two Druse were killed in the fighting. In response the Druse shelled East Beirut and the airport area on the 18th, 20th and 23rd, killing over 30 people, mostly Christian civilians. President Gemayel castigated the Syrians, who were still occupying eastern Lebanon, for allowing the Druse attacks, and warned that if the shelling continued the 'shells would be returned to Damascus' (Radio Lebanon).

NATIONAL SALVATION FRONT

On 23 July 1983 in Baalbeek, Walid Jumblatt, in conjunction with Sulieman Franjieh and Rashid Karami, announced the formation of the National Salvation Front (NSF), which was a consolidation of national opposition to the Withdrawal Agreement. The NSF included a 12-member national council, and a presidential council headed by Sulieman Franjieh, who declared that the NSF would function solely as a democratic opposition. Franjieh called on Lebanese leaders to take part in a national reconciliation dialogue, President Gemayel responded by suggesting a national referendum.

On 10 August three Lebanese cabinet ministers, on their way back to Beirut from talks with Sheikh Mohammed Abu Shakra, the Druse religious leader, were seized by members of the Druse Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) militia. They were held in Muktara, the Druse stronghold, for 24 hours before being handed over to the Israelis, together with a list of demands, which included the resignation of the Lebanese government and withdrawal of the Lebanese army from the Chouf region.

Artillery battles between the Druse and the Lebanese army continued spasmodically, the government claiming that Syrians were taking part in these duels. The airport was

closed for several days. A ceasefire lasted barely a week, causing Walid Jumblatt to declare on 1 September that the 'Druse are now in a state of war'. That day President Reagan ordered a US aircraft carrier, with a 2000-strong detachment of US marines on board, to the Eastern Mediterranean.

AMAL IN WEST BEIRUT

Meanwhile in West Beirut, where a general strike was enforced on 15 August, a two-week bout of fighting began between Amal and the Lebanese army, during which time Amal seized control of much of West Beirut. Fighting erupted again on the 28th near MNF positions on its southern edge, causing several UN casualties. The MNF detachments returned fire and used helicopter gunships against Amal positions. On the 31st the Lebanese army made successful counterattacks and regained control of most of West Beirut. Radio Lebanon reported that in the four days' fighting 79 had died and 326 were wounded, including a few UN personnel.

ISRAELI OPERATION MILLSTONE

On 9–10 July 1983 the Israelis abandoned an observation post in the hills to the east of Beirut, which was immediately occupied by the Lebanese army. On the 13th the Israeli cabinet mentioned the Awali River as being its first redeployment line, and on the 20th PLO-fired Katyusha rockets fell on Kiryat Shimona for the first time since June 1982. During August, Israel carried out extensive military engineering works along the Awali River line, establishing electronic surveillance devices and a network of supporting roads. It also repossessed several Falangist-held positions by force.

The next major move was on 4 September 1983, when Israel activated the first part of its Operation Millstone by rapidly withdrawing its troops from their positions on the southern edge of Beirut, and from part of the Beirut–

Damascus road, returning them to the Awali River line. The Lebanese army hurried south to occupy Khalde, but ran into difficulties with the Druse near Aley, where Druse militiamen were still struggling with Falangists.

Druse militiamen surrounded the crossroad town of Bhamdoun, trapping a large number of Falangists. They entered Bhamdoun on the 6th. The Falangists accused the Druse of 'unprecedented massacres': this was denied by the Druse, who counterclaimed that the Falangists had killed 45 Druse civilians in Kfar Matta after that town had been occupied by the Lebanese army. Two days later Druse militiamen captured Kfar Chamoun from the Falangists, and also surrounded the town of Deir al-Kamar, where a large number of Christian refugees were sheltering.

In this post-Israeli period in the Chouf the Lebanese army and the Falange occasionally fought side by side; at other times they were opponents. The Lebanese government insisted that the bulk of the fighting against the Lebanese army was being carried out by Syrians and Palestinians, while the Druse insisted they were fighting a lone war, on one occasion claiming they had rejected the help of Palestinian volunteers. On the 5th Syria asked the Arab League to expel Lebanon from the League and to declare a political and economic boycott against it. The Arab League did not respond.

From 6 September MNF forces became involved in fighting near Beirut airport. US marines suffered casualties when the Druse shelled MNF positions, and in response US warships shelled Druse positions to the north and east of Beirut, and also used heavy artillery to strike at Druse targets in the Chouf. President Reagan said that the US troops would reply to attacks by all means at their disposal, but excluded retaliatory strikes on behalf of the Lebanese army. The Lebanese government asked for the size of the MNF to be increased, but this was refused.

As the fighting between Falangists and Druse for territory spread southwards, it is said that IDF units occasionally moved northwards across the Awali River line to support the Falangists, moving them tactically in armoured vehicles about the battlefield, and even giving tank and artillery support, although refusing the Falangists' request for Israeli

air strikes. On the 10th the Falangists accused the Druse of a massacre at a village called Bire, alleging that more than 50 Christians had been killed. A PSP spokesman denied this and said that the deaths had been caused by Druse shelling.

Lebanese army units holding the hill town of Souk al-Gharb were attacked by Druse using Syrian-supplied tanks and guns. They managed to beat off the attack but were unable to drive the Druse from an adjoining ridge, where Druse guns were positioned to shell Beirut. On the 16th the Lebanese air force came into action for the first time since the 1975–76 war. Its planes attacked Druse and Syrian gun emplacements in the Chouf, while US naval aircraft flew protectively overhead lest Syrian aircraft intervene. One Lebanese aircraft was shot down and two others were damaged.

US warships lying off Beirut indulged in massive bouts of shelling with their heavy guns, some of which had not been fired in anger since the Second World War. A five-day bombardment began on 16 September, aimed at Druse positions in the hills above Beirut. This action was criticised by the French government, but when a French UN soldier was killed by Druse on the 22nd, French combat aircraft joined in the allied air strikes on Druse and Syrian gun emplacements. The United States claimed the heavy US naval barrages had halted a planned Druse advance on Souk al-Gharb, and thence into West Beirut.

THE WAZZAN GOVERNMENT RESIGNS

Meanwhile, on 6 September 1983 Prime Minister Wazzan resigned to make way for a 'government of national unity'. It was said that the PSP had insisted on this as a precondition for agreeing to a ceasefire. President Gemayel asked Wazzan to carry on as caretaker, so nothing changed for the moment. The ceasefire announcement (made in Damascus) did not come until the 25th. It was to be implemented by what became known as the Reconciliation Security Committee, composed of representatives of the Lebanese army, the Falange, the PSP and Amal, and monitored by

neutral observers. The first meeting of the Reconciliation Security Committee, chaired by President Gemayel, was held in Beirut on the 28th, at which it was agreed that POWs and detainees held by militias should be exchanged, that militia-controlled barricades across roads in Beirut should be removed, and that all the roads around the airport should be reopened.

Walid Jumblatt refused to take part in the reconciliation talks because of their location in Beirut, so various alternative venues were suggested, but rejected. It was eventually agreed that the talks would be held in Geneva. The first meeting was held on 31 October, chaired by President Gemayel and attended by leaders of all the principal factions, as well as US and Syrian observers. A constitutional committee was nominated but did not meet until 7 November, after which the reconciliation talks dissolved into negative arguments and fruitless consultations.

Several attacks were made on MNF detachments in Beirut during September and October. For example several French and Italian UN soldiers were wounded by sniper fire; two US marines were seized by Amal, but released by Nabih Berri, Amal's leader; two others were killed by artillery fire; and five were killed by a car-bomb explosion: Amal was generally blamed for all these acts. During this two-month period there were also spasmodic outbursts of fighting between the Lebanese army and the Amal militia. The Lebanese army was handicapped by friction between its Christian and Shia soldiers, and the fact that the Shias refused to take part in operations against Amal. Also, Druse artillery units positioned in the hills overlooking the capital periodically shelled MNF locations.

A DRUSE ADMINISTRATION

For some time Jumblatt had been claiming that Druse soldiers in the Lebanese army had been deserting to join the PSP or other Druse militias – an issue that was highlighted when General Nadin al-Hakim, the Druse chief of staff, was said to have defected to the PSP. At a press conference with Jumblatt, al-Hakim said he intended to remain

in the Chouf as a national duty, and denied he had resigned from the Lebanese army.

On 1 October 1983 Walid Jumblatt announced that a local administration would be established in Druse-controlled areas until the return of central government institutions, to be headed by an eight-man supreme administrative authority that would include both a central committee and a general congress. A Lebanese government spokesman disparaged this move as an attempt to partition Lebanon into cantons, alleging that it was part of a long-term Syrian plan to obtain hegemony over parts of Lebanon.

SUICIDE BOMBINGS

October 1983 became memorable in Lebanon for the new phenomenon of suicide bombing. On the 23rd in Beirut, two were launched concurrently against US and French MNF detachments. One suicide bomber drove a truck loaded with explosives into the US marine base, crashing it against the four-storey main HQ building. The driver and 260 marines died in the explosion, and the building was completely demolished. The second suicide bomber drove his vehicle, also packed with explosives, into the French base and crashed it into a building: the explosion killed the driver and 58 French soldiers. In both cases responsibility was claimed by al-Jihad al-Islami.

A few days later, on 4 November, another suicide bomber, later named as Ahmad Qassam, a 15-year-old boy who had been blessed by his mullah, drove a vehicle loaded with explosives into the Israeli HQ in Tyre, the explosion killing him and 61 others: 28 Israeli soldiers, and 33 Palestinians and Lebanese awaiting interrogation. Again responsibility was claimed by al-Jihad al-Islami.

AL-JIHAD AL-ISLAMI AND THE LEBANESE HEZBOLLAH

A few days after Israel had invaded Lebanon on 14 June 1982, it had been announced in Tehran that 500 Iranian

volunteers had been flown to Lebanon to fight alongside the Palestinians against Israel. Although officially labelled 'Revolutionary Guards', they were in fact members of Hezbollah, the military arm of the ruling Islamic Revolutionary Party, which had considerable experience in terrorist activities at home and abroad. They were led by Sheikh Mahmoud Hussein Fadlallah. Ayatollah Khomeini had decided to take the leaderless Shia population in Lebanon under his wing 'on his way to Jerusalem'. Sheikh Fadlallah had settled into the Bekaa Valley and had quickly formed a comprehensive Islamic political–military–intelligence–welfare organisation that had become known as the 'Lebanese Hezbollah'. In March 1982 Amal, which had initially worked closely with Sheikh Fadlallah, had proclaimed Ayatollah Khomeini to be the 'Imam of all Muslims' throughout the world, which had upset Lebanese Sunnis.

The Lebanese Hezbollah had formed a militia, known as al-Jihad al-Islami (previously only a code name used for terrorist incidents), and a terrorist training centre, run by Imad Moughniyeh, a Lebanese Shia and master terrorist who specialised, amongst other things, in producing suicide bombers. When Hussein Moussawi had been expelled from Amal in 1982 he had become associated with the Lebanese Hezbollah, and his breakaway faction had become known as Islamic Amal, developing as a terrorist group.

The MNF's response to the Hezbollah suicide bombings in October 1983 was to launch aircraft strikes against Hezbollah targets in the Bekaa Valley. It also struck at Syrian and Druse targets in the Chouf region and kept up its artillery barrages against Druse guns overlooking Beirut. French aircraft flew from a French offshore aircraft carrier to strike at Nebi Chit in the Bekaa Valley, thought to house the Islamic Amal, and also at Ras el-Ain, near Baalbek, the Iranian Islamic Fundamentalist base. US and French aircraft continually flew low over hostile territory, sometimes incurring casualties. For example on 4 December three US fighter aircraft were brought down by shoulder-held SAM-7 missiles over Syrian-held territory.

THE BATTLE CONTINUES

Israel reacted to its disastrous loss at Tyre by clamping a three-day curfew on the city and closing the Awali River line crossing points. Israeli planes frequently bombed hostile targets, losing a combat aircraft to ground fire over Bhamdoun on 21 November 1983.

In early December Walid Jumblatt promised to lift the sieges of Souk el-Gharb and Deir el-Kamar, which had been cut off since September and had to rely on weekly Red Cross relief convoys to provide essential supplies. Jumblatt said that the lifting of the seiges would be without preconditions, being a simple gesture of goodwill on humanitarian grounds, despite the fact that a senior Druse cleric, Sheikh Halim Takieddin, had been assassinated at his home in Beirut on the 1st (the suspects were Falangists).

As promised, the evacuation of the some 2500 Christians from Deir el-Kamar and nearby Souk el-Gharb took place on the 15th. The evacuees were mainly civilians, but there were also several hundred Falangist militiamen. All were transported in Israeli army vehicles across the Awali River line, and then southwards into Major Haddad's territory.

Meanwhile in Beirut on 5 December a huge car bomb demolished a large apartment block in the Shia quarter, killing 12 people and injuring over 80. The Christian FLLF claimed responsibility. The same day eight US marines, sheltering from an artillery barrage, were killed when their bunker received a direct hit. Three days later the United States announced that 300 marines had been redeployed to offshore ships to reduce their vulnerability.

In response to Syrian anti-aircraft weapons opening up against US combat aircraft flying over Syrian positions in Lebanon, on the 14th the naval guns of a US battleship fired 'over 80 16-inch naval shells' (USN press release) at targets some 15 miles inland. This provoked the US Congress to condemn the use of excessive force in a peacekeeping mission. An explosion outside the French MNF base on the 21st killed one soldier and wounded another 14 – responsibility was again claimed by al-Jihad al-Islami.

Violent clashes between Amal militia and the Lebanese

army broke out on 24 December in Beirut when the Lebanese army attempted to occupy positions just evacuated by French troops. This time the Druse militia joined Amal in the fighting, which forced the Lebanese army detachments to withdraw from the scene after a five-day struggle. On the 28th a ceasefire was declared by the Reconciliation Security Committee. Farther south in Israeli-occupied territory, Israeli troops continued to be harassed by hostile militias, and a general wave of civilian opposition was also becoming apparent. Meanwhile Israeli combat aircraft made frequent bombing raids on Islamic Amal and al-Jihad al-Islami training camps in the Bekaa Valley.

THE DEATH OF MAJOR HADDAD

On 4 December 1983 it became apparent that Major Haddad, leader and commander of the self-declared (in April 1979) Israeli-backed Lebanese Free State, was dying of cancer. Before his death on the 14th, Haddad, who had been struck off the Lebanese army list, was reinstated into the Lebanese army with full rights. There was some delay in appointing his successor, and it was not until 4 April 1984 that it was announced he would be succeeded by General Antoine Lahud, who would be fully recognised by the Lebanese government. Lahud, a Maronite member of Chamoun's NLP and a regular soldier, had been commander of the mountain region until his retirement the previous year. This government-approved, Israeli-supported, mainly Christian militia became known as the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

8 Withdrawal and Chaos: 1984–85

On 5 January 1984 the Lebanese government announced that a disengagement plan had been approved by the Israeli and Syrian governments, the Lebanese Forces (the new Falange-dominated Christian militia group), and the Amal and Druse militias. The plan provided for the separation of warring factions from each other and included the resumption of Lebanese army control over a strip of coastal land, stretching about 30 miles both north and south of Beirut. It also catered for Lebanese government security forces to patrol the Shia quarter in South Beirut, and the adjacent hills. However implementation of the plan was delayed by continual interfactional fighting in and around Beirut, and also in Tripoli. Discussion took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on the 10th in a wider effort to end the conflict. Syria insisted that the withdrawal agreement, which had not been ratified by the Lebanese, be renounced.

In Beirut, Nabih Berri of Amal and Walid Jumblatt, the Druse leader, were demanding the resignation of President Amin Gemayel. As a precondition for his acceptance of the disengagement plan Jumblatt insisted on the abolition of press censorship, the ending of curfew restrictions in Beirut and the reinstatement of all the Druse soldiers who had deserted from the Lebanese army in September 1983 to join his PSP, said to number over 800.

A bout of Druse shelling hit East Beirut on the 16th, and the Lebanese army and Amal joined in on the fringes; 22 people were killed and 65 injured (Lebanese police estimates). The airport also came under Druse shell fire, while US warships fired their guns at Druse emplacements in the surrounding hills.

Antagonism began to be extended to foreigners, one of the first being the American Malcolm Kerr, president of the American University of Beirut, who was shot dead on the 18th. Responsibility was claimed by al-Jihad al-Islami.

Two days previously that group had kidnapped Hussein Farrash, the Saudi consul in Beirut, claiming he was being tried by Islamic law. Later, when Amal militiamen raided a house in West Beirut they found two kidnap victims: a French architect, and Frank Regier, a member of staff at the American University of Beirut.

FALL OF WEST BEIRUT

On 1 February 1984 Jumblatt called the Lebanese government's disengagement plan a waste of time, while in Beirut his Druse militia linked up with Amal to attack Lebanese army positions. By the following day Amal had secured the southern Shia district. On the 3rd, combined Druse and Amal operations were mounted against Lebanese army units in the southern and eastern parts of the city, while fighting also developed in the central area.

Nabih Berri called on all Muslim ministers to leave the government immediately, and for all Shia soldiers in the Lebanese army to disobey orders and return to barracks. Prime Minister Wazzan again resigned, but was once more persuaded by the president to remain as caretaker. The president produced a six-point programme that included the resumption of reconciliation talks and the formation of a government of national unity. In addition the new Lebanese army was to move into designated areas, and there were to be negotiations with Syria and Israel.

This was followed by the heaviest fighting in Beirut since 1976, as combined Druse and Amal militias drove Lebanese army units out of the city, largely due to the refusal of Shia soldiers to fight against coreligionists – in fact some actually fought against their own army units. In the two days of fighting it is estimated that about 300 people were killed and about 800 wounded. On the 8th and 9th a massive bombardment by offshore US warships pounded Druse positions in the hills overlooking Beirut, an operation that invoked the disapproval of the US Congress.

On the 13th the Druse militia drove Lebanese army units and the Falange militia from the Chouf towns of Aley, Kfar Matta and others. At Kfar Matta over 100 bodies were

discovered, said to be Druse who had been massacred by Falangists in September 1983. On the same day an Amal force drove out Lebanese army units from positions on the southern approaches to Beirut. They occupied Khalde, and during the following two days moved against Falangist positions to reach Damour, meeting little resistance. By this time hordes of Lebanese refugees were fleeing southwards towards Israeli-held territory, including a large number of Lebanese army soldiers and Falangist militiamen. Beirut had fallen to the Druse and Amal militias, and the Lebanese army had been decisively defeated.

THE SAUDI PEACE PLAN

On 16 February 1984 President Amin Gemayel announced his acceptance of the Saudi peace plan, which mainly called for abrogation of the Withdrawal Agreement as that would have meant peace with Israel. Syria indicated that as far as it was concerned Gemayel's survival as president depended on this condition, and as soon as he accepted it they put pressure on Berri and Jumblatt to agree to Gemayel's continuing presidency. Other relevant conditions of the Saudi plan included implementation of the disengagement plan, formation of a government of national unity and the simultaneous withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon.

Syria rejected the Saudi plan, as did Israel, while Jumblatt said it was too little, too late. The Falange and the NLP warned they would actively oppose it if the Withdrawal Agreement was abrogated. On 5 March the Lebanese government cancelled the Withdrawal Agreement, which it had not even ratified.

RECONCILIATION TALKS CONTINUE

The second session of the reconciliation talks began in Lausanne, Switzerland, on 12 March 1984 under the chairmanship of President Amin Gemayel. The participants ordered an immediate ceasefire, which had in fact been generally observed in the Beirut area since the Lebanese

army's defeat. They also established a higher security committee to supervise the disengagement of opposing factions. It was agreed on the 15th that all kidnap victims held by the various factions should be freed, and that trials should begin of those arrested on national security charges. This was for international consumption – none of the delegates had any real intention of complying with such conditions unless it was to their own individual advantage. Kidnapping remained a very black side of the Lebanese conflict, each faction having its own private prisons (although none admitted the fact), including the Syrians and the Israelis.

President Gemayel presented a 27-point plan, whose controversial conditions included increased powers for the Lebanese prime minister, who should be elected by the Chamber of Deputies, equal representation of Christian and Muslim deputies in the Assembly, and administrative decentralisation. Both Berri and Jumblatt rejected this programme. It was agreed that a 32-member commission of national reconciliation and constitutional reform be formed at the next meeting. The session adjourned on 20 March, after agreement was reached to meet again in Beirut within the next six months. Sulieman Franjieh announced he was withdrawing from the National Salvation Front as its policy was now inconsistent with its earlier decisions.

THE MNF WITHDRAWS

On 7 February 1984 President Reagan had announced that the US contingent of the MNF would be transferred to ships lying offshore, leaving just a small number of US marines to guard the American embassy in Beirut. In addition the US training team would remain with the Lebanese army. The US detachment began to withdraw on the 17th; the British, French and Italian detachments followed suit, and were clear of Lebanon by the end of March. Amal militiamen took over their positions, including those at the airport, which were then handed over to the Lebanese 6th Brigade. The brigade was commanded by a Shia colonel and consisted mainly of Shia soldiers who had refused to fight against Amal in the battle for Beirut. The positions

that the French had held along the Green Line, parts of which had already been taken over by Amal, Druse and Falangists, were eventually handed over to a specially formed force of Lebanese police and recalled army reservists.

In Tehran, Ayatollah Khomeini loudly crowed that his Hezbollah suicide bombers had driven the Americans out of Lebanon, which was true. He sent his warm congratulations to Hussein Moussawi and the other Shia leaders concerned, urging them to increase their efforts against the Israelis.

At a meeting of the UN Security Council on 29 February the French introduced a resolution calling for a UN peacekeeping force to be sent to Lebanon. This was vetoed by the Soviet Union – Soviets were now taking a fresh look at the Middle East.

THE GREEN LINE

Firing across the Green Line continued spasmodically in March 1984. For example on the 14th more than 20 people were killed near the Museum crossing, causing it to be closed, but after a meeting of the Higher Security Committee it was reopened on the 16th. On the 22nd Druse militiamen drove members of the Mourabitoun from their positions along the Green Line. A Druse spokesman explained that it had been a necessary law and order operation designed to prevent violations of the ceasefire. It was also an indication of the fickleness of temporary alliances of convenience in this Lebanese setting.

At a meeting of the Higher Security Committee on 9 April, chaired by President Gemayel and attended by representatives of the Falange, Amal and the PSP, it was agreed to establish a buffer zone on either side of the Green Line. The zone would be patrolled by the police, aided by a body of retired army officers and former Lebanese army soldiers. Berri objected on the ground that this would merely consolidate the positions of rival factions. At another meeting on 18 April the implementation of the disengagement plan was announced, and there were calls for ceasefire and an end to mutual hostile propaganda. On the 19th, 200 truce

observers took up positions along the Green Line and in Souk el-Gharb.

Also in April, a reconciliation meeting took place between President Amin Gemayel and ex-President Sulieman Franjieh, both Maronites. For years their families had been engaged in a deadly feud, which had influenced Franjieh in his initial decision to join the opposition National Salvation Front, which he had abruptly left after the second round of reconciliation talks. Furthermore a Libyan mediator brought together Walid Jumblatt and Ibrahim Kheilat, leader of the Mourabitoun. Kheilat had emerged from the wreck of the NDM as a dominant leader. General reconciliation was in the air.

THE KARAMI GOVERNMENT

On 29 April 1984 Rashid Karami, who had been asked by the president to become prime minister (for the eighth time), announced the formation of a 10-man cabinet. This included Camille Chamoun, Nabih Berri, Pierre Gemayel (aged 84) and Selim Hoss, a most unlikely collection as they had been enemies for a long time, but no one from the former Wazzan cabinet. There was some argument over portfolios, as well as some pointed absences from meetings, the personal need for prestige interfering with reconciliation.

Meanwhile the international media, which had paid scant attention to the hundreds of Lebanese victims of abduction, now turned its spotlight on Hezbollah's tactic of kidnapping Westerners, whose captivity caused Western anguish and centred interest on the Lebanese theatre. On 8 May Benjamin Weir, a US missionary, was seized in Beirut. Responsibility was claimed by al-Jihad al-Islami, which also claimed to be holding William Buckley, a US CIA chief, and Jeremy Lavin, a US citizen.

The Green Line continued to be a hot spot, and on 3 May a planned multiconfessional peace march along this route had to be cancelled when a flurry of rocket and mortar fire broke out across it: about 20 civilians were killed and almost 80 injured.

On the 20th Prime Minister Karami announced a cabinet agreement for a national covenant for reform, but did not release any details. When addressing the Chamber of Deputies on the 31st, Karami outlined a programme that included increasing the number of deputies from 99 to 120 to provide for equal representation between Christians and Muslims, and ending the practice of confessional quotas for the civil service. He also said he would offer Israel security guarantees for its northern border. Asking for emergency powers to govern by decree for nine months, he referred to his government as the 'last chance cabinet', but he was not able to obtain a vote of confidence until 13 June.

Meanwhile there were spasmodic exchanges of rocket and mortar fire across the Green Line, and fighting periodically erupted in Souk al-Gharb. On 11 June there was intense shelling across the Green Line: over 100 were killed and some 250 injured. The Muslims alleged that the Falangists were deliberately trying to deter Muslim deputies from attending the National Assembly sessions.

THE SUPREME MILITARY COMMAND

On 23 June 1984 Prime Minister Karami announced a new security plan, which included redeployment of the Lebanese army and the formation of a six-man military council, composed of senior officers of the Lebanese army and representatives of the principal militias, who would serve as the supreme military command. Pierre Gemayel undertook to ensure that the Falangist militias would cooperate with the Lebanese army in implementing the planned redeployment, although representatives of the Lebanese Forces militia, the majority of whom were Falangist, initially stated they would refuse to surrender any of their positions. However it was announced on 1 July by Fady Frem, commander of the Lebanese Forces militia, that he would accept the deployment of the Lebanese army in East Beirut if this was accompanied by a similar deployment in West Beirut. He insisted that the Lebanese Forces must continue to exist as they were needed to protect the Christians.

The security plan also included a reorganization of the brigade structure of the Lebanese army to make each brigade multiconfessional, the elimination of the Green Line, and the reopening of the airport and the port of Beirut. On 23 June 1984 General Ibrahim Tannous, Lebanese army commander since December 1982, was replaced by General Michel Aoun, a Maronite and currently in command of Lebanese army units in Souk al-Gharb. On the same day Colonel Mustafa Nasser, a Shia, was appointed to head the National Security Department, a newly created body responsible directly to the cabinet.

Meanwhile bombardments across the Green Line erupted spasmodically, as did fighting in Souk al-Gharb, with a deadly toll of casualties. There was also renewed fighting in the Tripoli area between rival militias, but this quietened down when Syrian troops intervened.

WITHDRAWAL BEGINS

After a Military Council meeting on 2 July 1984 the Amal and Druse militias began to withdraw their heavy weapons, including guns and armoured vehicles, from West Beirut, and on the 4th Lebanese army units began to take their place along the Green Line. The mainly Christian 5th Brigade assumed control of the Falangist positions, and the mainly Muslim 6th Brigade took over the Amal and Druse posts. The following day army bulldozers started to clear the Green Line of barricades.

After delays relating to the release of kidnap victims, Beirut airport, closed since 6 February, was reopened on 9 July, and the port area on the 11th. The US, British and other embassies moved from West Beirut into East Beirut, and by the end of July the last US marines had left Lebanon.

Amal remained deeply concerned about Imam Musa Sadr, who was still missing in Libya, and several terrorist acts were carried out by a Shia terrorist group called the 'Sons of Musa Sadr'. On 23 June a Libyan diplomat was kidnapped in Beirut, but was released when the Amal militia stormed a house in West Beirut. Another Libyan diplomat was seized on 9 July, responsibility being claimed by the

Sons of Musa Sadr, who also claimed to have bombed the Libyan People's Bureau (embassy) in Beirut on the 11th.

SOUTHERN LEBANON

In Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon the IDF was continually being subjected to guerrilla attacks, and in response the Israelis cordoned off villages and launched air strikes against suspected guerrilla targets north of their zone. Among other incidents, on 13 April 1984 a suicide bomber drove his truck into an Israeli position near Sidon, killing six Israel solders; on the 26th, in response to a grenade attack near Nabatiyeh, Israelis fired into a crowd, killing two civilians; on 11 May in the same areas a grenade attack killed one Israeli soldier; and on the 16th Israeli troops raided the Ain Helweh refugee camp and arrested over 150 people – three civilians were killed and several wounded in the scuffle.

An IDF spokesman announced on 18 May that a prisoner attempting to escape from the Ansar detention centre had been shot dead; others had escaped but some of these had been recaptured. (The Ansar detention centre was supposed to have been shut down after earlier detainee exchanges.) On 28 June Israel released another 40 Shia detainees from the Ansar camp. In generally Israel was very coy about announcing details of POW and detainee exchanges, usually ensuring that they were conducted covertly, without a media presence. However this was not always possible when the Red Cross handled the exchanges, but even then few details emerged and individual names were seldom made public. However in an exchange on 28 June it was reported that 291 Syrians, including two air force colonels and 20 civilians, were released on the annexed Golan Heights in exchange for five Israeli soldiers who had been captured when they had strayed into Syrian-held territory on 1 May.

Sidon was nominally handed over to the SLA, and on 18 June Israeli soldiers shot dead three people. It was alleged that they had been caught planting explosives, although the Red Cross disputed this and insisted that the Israelis had fired indiscriminately. On the 29th Israeli naval

craft stopped the Cyprus–Beirut passenger ferry and escorted it to Haifa in Israel. Nine individuals were removed from the ferry, which was then allowed to proceed.

Frequent Israeli air strikes continued to be launched against militia camps, including one in Janta in the Bekaa Valley, two miles from Syrian-held terrain, and another in Bar Elias, just south of Zahle and said to be a PFLP-GC regional HQ. The Nahr al-Bared refugee camp near Tripoli was hit by an Israeli air strike, and a combined Israeli naval and air assault was made on Aranib Island, just off Tyre, said to be a PLO base and a launching point for attacks on Israel.

On 11 July the Lebanese cabinet announced the establishment of a special committee to investigate incidents of kidnapping and to attempt to secure the release of any hostages still in the hands of militias. The committee would be jointly headed by Joseph Skaff (the information minister) and Selim Hoss (minister of labour). This had been prompted by continuing demonstration by the families of hostage victims in Beirut. The Lebanese Forces claimed that nearly 250 Christians had been kidnapped between November 1982 and January 1984. Later (12 August) the special committee published details of 764 kidnap victims whose 'fate is uncertain'.

RETURN TO THE MOUNTAIN

A problem that constantly cropped up was the return of Christian refugees to their homes in the mountainous area south-east of Beirut (this area was known simply as the 'Mountain'). They had been driven out by Druse militias in 1983 following the Druse victory over the Falangist militias. Eventually a meeting was held in Bhamdoun on 22 July 1984 between Walid Jumblatt (minister of works), Fady Frem (leader of the Lebanese Forces) and other leaders to consider the problem seriously for the first time. Jumblatt suggested that the 'Return to the Mountain' should be by gradual stages, but Frem would not agree to this.

Another meeting was held on 5 August in Deir al-Gharb, the scene of heavy Druse–Lebanese Forces fighting in 1983.

Jumblatt agreed in principle to a 'Return to the Mountains', with the proviso that the returning refugees must not include any members of the Lebanese Forces, nor have any links with that organisation. There matters seemed to rest for the moment, Jumblatt being unwilling to allow the return to take place until he could obtain some compensating advantage.

SECURITY DEPLOYMENT

Anxious to expand the security plan, government ministers had discussions with militia leaders on the possibility of deploying the mainly Druse 7th Brigade in the Mountain area, as well as dismantling the rigid confrontation lines and separating the Lebanese army from Druse militia units in the Souk al-Gharb area. Progress was slow, and clashes continued in and around Beirut. On 6 July a car bomb exploded in Byblos, north of Junieh, killing three people and injuring others, which hardened the attitude of the Lebanese Forces.

On 29 July the mainly Muslim 6th Brigade, now stationed in West Beirut, intervened in fighting between the Mourabitoun and the Druse militia, curbing it momentarily. Both Christian and Muslim militiamen maintained a high profile on the streets of Beirut, and were actively resisting the surrender of their arms, although that was part of the security plan. The Christians alleged that the 6th Brigade was actually taking orders from Amal, and working closely with it. At this stage the PSP and Amal were mainly equipped with Syrian weaponry, and even though the ADF mandates had been revoked by President Gemayel in 1983, the Syrian government still exercised influence over every political and security decision taken by the Lebanese government.

THE TAWHEED IN TRIPOLI

In talks in Damascus between Prime Minister Rashid Karami and President Assad of Syria on 25 August 1984, Assad

approved Karami's plan for further Lebanese army deployment in Beirut, and also to extend the security plan to encompass the Tripoli area, where the death toll was steadily mounting. The main fighting in Tripoli was now between the Tawheed militia (the military arm of the Sunni Islamic Unification Movement, IUM, which had occasionally sided with the Syrian armed forces) and the pro-Syrian Arab Red Knights, the military arm of the (Alawite) Arab Democratic Party (ADP).

In mid August the Tawheed was joined by two other anti-Alawite groups, the Mosques Committee and the Islamic Committee, which were involved in imposing an Islamic administration on Tripoli. The Tawheed's position was strengthened when it gained control of the port area after a heavy bout of street fighting that ended on 22 August, having caused more than 100 deaths and 300 casualties (Lebanese police records). Control of the port meant control of maritime customs duties, now estimated to amount to some $80 000 a month.

Clashes between pro- and anti-Alawite militias in Tripoli continued into September, but on the 18th a Syria-mediated peace accord was concluded between the IUM and the ADP, the main contenders. This included the withdrawal of armed militias from the streets of Tripoli, the storage of their medium and heavy arms at designated parks, guarded by Syrian troops and Lebanese police, and the establishment of a joint Syrian–Lebanese force to supervise the ceasefire and maintain order in the city. Both sides promised to execute any of their militiamen who broke the ceasefire conditions. In the Bekaa Valley, Syrian troops forced out Iranian Revolutionary Guards from Baalbek, a Hezbollah stronghold.

VIOLENCE IN BEIRUT

During August 1984 the Saudi consulate in Beirut, which has been closed since February, was set on fire by a Shia group, alleged to be Iranian-inspired, in protest at the Saudi decision that all Lebanese Muslims planning a pilgrimage to Mecca must first obtain visas from the Saudi office in

Damascus. Both the Soviet and the British embassy in Beirut suffered rocket attacks. A British journalist working for Reuters was kidnapped, but released three weeks later, Reuter's thanks being accorded to President Assad.

A car bomb exploded in Beirut on 5 September, killing four people and injuring almost 30. The target could have been either Selim Hoss (minister of labour) or Prime Minister Rashid Karami, both of whom narrowly escaped death on this occasion. On the 20th a Hezbollah suicide bomber crashed a truck loaded with explosive into the British embassy, now in temporary accommodation in East Beirut, causing 15 deaths and many injuries. The American and British ambassadors had a narrow escape, the former being a visitor to the embassy at the time. In this instance, guards had shot the driver as he weaved his way between concrete bollards, designed to slow down approaching vehicles, killing him before he actually hit the building. His real target had been the underground car park beneath the embassy. Responsibility was once again claimed by al-Jihad al-Islami.

DEATH OF THE DRUSE CHIEF OF STAFF

On 23 August 1984 a Lebanese army helicopter carrying nine senior officers crashed in thick fog near Beirut. All on board were killed, including General Nadim Hakim, the Druse chief of staff and commander of the 7th Brigade. Hakim had temporarily defected to the PSP in late 1983, but had been reinstated in the Lebanese army and was largely credited with expanding the security plan to include redeployment in the Mountain area. At Hakim's funeral, Jumblatt suggested that the helicopter had been sabotaged and he described President Gemayel as the 'butcher', for which he afterwards apologised.

On the 29th Pierre Gemayel, the 78-year-old president of the Falange Party, died and was succeeded by Elie Karameh.

On 19 September the Lebanese cabinet announced that it would form a 40-member constitutional committee – to be chaired by President Gemayel, with Rashid Karami as

secretary – to redistribute power more evenly between the sects. It later announced that the Chamber of Deputies would be enlarged from 99 to 122 deputies. It was also agreed that all ministers should make a 'pact of honour' to work harder for the release of hostages, and to undertake not to make personal attacks on colleagues.

In October Hussein al-Husseini, a former leader of Amal, was elected as speaker of the National Assembly. Also in October, Fuad Abu Nader was appointed as commander of the Falange-dominated Lebanese Forces, in place of Fady Frem. Nader was said to be on more friendly terms with Syria, and had also retained a link with Israel.

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Walid Jumblatt announced on 9 October that he had formed the National Democratic Front (NDF) from the ashes of the shattered NDM. The new political opposition alliance would include his PSP, the Arab Socialist Union, the LCP, the Baath Party, the Arab Democratic Party and the SNSP. Amal confirmed it would not become a member, but would be allied to it. Jumblatt also declared he would no longer be bound by the pact of honour.

FURTHER DEPLOYMENT

After two days of heavy fighting along the Green Line, on 26 November 1984 three Lebanese army brigades moved to assume full control over both East and West Beirut, which marked the completion of the first phase of the security plan. Militia leaders had promised full cooperation in surrendering their checkpoints and barricades, and that they would keep their gunmen off the streets.

The remaining two phases of the plan involved occupation of the Beirut–Damascus highway, and occupation of the coastal road. However progress on this was stopped when fighting broke out again between Druse and Falangist militias in the hills around Kharoub, just south-east of the capital, which effectively prevented the Lebanese army from

moving southwards. A car bomb in Aley killed four people on 29th, which provoked retaliatory artillery attacks on the Christian sectors in Beirut – at least three people died. These outbreaks rumbled on, causing an Israeli armoured column to cross northwards over the Awali River with the intention of intervening, but it halted before it reached the troubled area, and then withdrew. On 10 December there was renewed fighting between the Lebanese army and Druse militias at Souk al-Gharb, and yet again Druse artillery and mortar shells fell on East Beirut. On the 14th the Druse commander of the 7th Brigade was shot dead in his vehicle in Beirut.

ECONOMIC NOTES

Despite the ravages of this continuing civil war the economy of Lebanon seemed to remain almost viable, loans and grants being received from certain Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, nominally for reconstruction. During 1984 unpaid taxes amounted to some $300 million, the balance of payments deficit passed the $300 million mark the value of the Lebanese pound was falling and some 25 per cent of the workforce was unemployed. There was also a shortage of professional and skilled workers, as so many had left the country. In October the government again tried unsuccessfully to take over the illegally operated ports, ordering the coastguards to seize suspect cargo ships. In August the Lebanese government established a Council for Foreign Economic Relations, to encourage investment. Infrastructural damage was estimated to be over $4 billion, and some 600 000 Lebanese were displaced (*Financial Times*).

TRIPOLI

On 18 December 1984 the last provisions of the September 1984 peace agreement between Sunni and Alawite Muslim militias were implemented when the Lebanese Army 2nd Brigade moved into Tripoli, where the barricades were

removed and armed militiamen withdrew from the streets. On 1 February 1985 a car-bomb explosion outside a mosque killed 12 people, and a similar one on the 10th caused another ten deaths.

ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL

On 7 January 1985 the discussion between Israel and the Lebanese government were resumed. Little progress had been made since they began in November 1984, mainly because the Lebanese were demanding a definite timetable for Israeli withdrawal and refused to agree to the Israeli condition that the UNIFIL mandate should be extended to cover much of southern Lebanon. The Lebanese insisted that UNIFIL was a matter for the Lebanese government only. On the 14th the Israeli cabinet agreed to implement a three-stage withdrawal operation over a period of six to nine months, but Israel's talks with Lebanese government officials were broken off on the 22nd, due to attacks on Israeli armed forces in Lebanon.

Israel claimed that in the first seven days of January there had been 28 attacks on Israeli soldiers and 13 on the SLA, and that the attacks were continuing. Israel's response was to mount reprisal raids on villages suspected of harbouring 'terrorists'. Many arrests were made – the Lebanese killed in these operations were arbitrarily classed as 'terrorists'. Few details were released as Israel kept the media on a tight rein. Also, many people suspected of collaborating with the Israelis simply disappeared. The Israeli Shin Bet, the internal security service, was reputed to be active in southern Lebanon, its agents operating in plain clothes and unmarked vehicles.

Amal and Palestinian militias began to use roadside bombs that were activated by remote control as Israeli vehicles came alongside them. Israel responded by using its 'reconnaissance by fire' tactic, killing many Lebanese working in the fields. The Israeli-supported SLA began to decline in strength owing to the anticipated loss of active Israeli support and protection during their withdrawal. There was also friction and occasional confrontation between UNIFIL

troops and Israelis making raids on Shia villages. On one occasion French UNIFIL troops spread the French flag across a road leading into a village and threatened to open fire if Israeli troops marched over it. UNIFIL was openly voicing criticism of Israel's methods and conduct.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SIDON

Israeli troops began to withdraw from Sidon on 20 January 1985. On the same day a bomb explosion occurred at a meeting between Sunni and Shia leaders to discuss the prevention of factional violence once the Israelis had departed. The explosion killed one person and injured over 50, prompting a general strike in the city as Israeli involvement was suspected. By this time many who had collaborated with the Israelis had left, but some remained to support the SLA against Amal militias. The Israeli troops stayed clear of factional strife, concentrating on punitive actions and keeping their own casualties as low as possible. The most significant reaction to the departing Israelis was a revival of PLO militia activities in the Ain Helweh refugee camps, which had been quiescent since the Israeli invasion of June 1982.

Following an Israeli raid on a village called Marrakek on 6 February, Nabih Berri (the Amal leader and Lebanese minister of justice) announced that his Justice Ministry would begin to pay wages to militias fighting the Israelis. He called for another general strike in Sidon, and both Christians and Muslims took part. Berri predicted there would be more car-bomb attacks. On the 10th four Israeli soldiers were killed by roadside bombs near Metulla, an Israeli frontier town. On the 14th the Israelis foiled a militia's attempt to cross the Awali River into southern Lebanon, claiming that they had killed eleven 'terrorists' and captured nine.

Israeli troops pulled out from Sidon completely on 15 February, two days ahead of schedule, to be replaced by Lebanese army units, accompanied by President Gemayel and Prime Minister Karami, who were to attend the 'liberation' ceremonies. On the 19th a group of Iranian-backed

Hezbollah militiamen from the Bekaa Valley arrived in Sidon and mounted rowdy demonstration. They plastered the city with posters depicting Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian leader, as well as damaging bars and destroying alcohol stores. The Lebanese army and Hezbollah came into confrontation. On the same day a roadside bomb near Tyre killed the senior Israeli military advisor to the SLA, and in response Israeli troops mounted a major raid on a village named Bazouriyeh, detaining over 100 villagers.

THE ISRAELI 'IRON FIST'

The Israelis decided to operate an 'iron fist' policy in southern Lebanon during their withdrawal. For example on 21 February 1985 Israeli soldiers raided several Shia villages near Tyre, using bulldozers to crush cars and buildings; two days later more villages were raided in a similar manner, and on both occasions large numbers of villagers were detained. Night curfews were imposed on all areas south of the Litani River, suspects were deported and a tighter rein was put on journalists, who had to be accompanied by a military escort to the few places they were allowed to visit. The use of motorcycles was forbidden as a measure against roadside bombers. It was also forbidden for a vehicle to have only one occupant: there had to be two or more, this being an additional defence against suicide bombers. On the 27th a short exchange of fire occurred between Lebanese army units and an Israeli patrol that was attempting to cross the new frontier line.

THE SECOND STAGE ON THE WITHDRAWALS

On 3 March 1985 the Israelis commenced the second stage of their withdrawal, again ahead of schedule. They withdrew from their positions facing Syrian army troops in the Bekaa Valley, destroying their own and all PLO installations as they went. This time the 'resistance' used longer-range weapons, including rockets and mortars, and means of communication such as short-wave radios, which enabled

coded warning messages to be passed from Muslim clerics in their Mosque towers to militiamen in the field. The wide network of local informers used by the Israelis was rapidly falling apart. Despite media restrictions, journalists were writing reports on Israeli brutality, news of which raised eyebrows in the Western world.

Israeli aircraft strikes continued against Palestinian bases and training camps that were said to belong to Fatah, the PFLP-GC, the DFLP, the PLF and the PSF. The Israelis also claimed to have hit Bar Elias in the Bekaa Valley, the base of the 'rebel Musa-Fatah' faction, which was at odds with Arafat. The second stage was completed by 11 March.

THE THIRD STAGE OF WITHDRAWAL

The third stage of the Israeli withdrawal began on 17 March, amid rumours that Israel was planning to retain a 'security zone', to be held mainly by the SLA with Israeli support. It was confirmed by the Israeli cabinet on 19 April that Israel was retaining the right to operate in a frontier strip 'up to five miles north' of the Israeli border. The Israelis began to expel Muslim militants from this strip, and in mid May imposed night curfews and vehicle restrictions, while military engineers constructed a new defensive line fronted by a deep antitank ditch as a defence against suicide bombers.

Punitive Israeli raids occurred periodically, one being against Shia villages south of Sidon on the 21st, when over 20 people were killed, including two journalists. In April the notorious Ansar detention camp, much criticised by the Red Cross, was finally closed, most of the some 2000 detainees being transferred to prisons in Israel. The Israeli troops withdrew from Tyre on 29 April. The number of hostile militia attacks against Israelis fell considerably, which was largely attributed to the fact that Amal, the principal resistance militia, was coming into confrontation with Hezbollah and resurgent Palestinian groups based in refugee camps. For example there was a major clash between Amal and pro-Arafat PLO groups during April.

US CIA INTERVENTION

On 8 March 1985 a massive car bomb exploded outside the Beirut home of Sheikh Fadlallah, the Hezbollah leader, killing at least 60 people and injuring over 200. The Sheikh was not at home. He at once accused Israel, but this time unjustly as it had been orchestrated by a covert CIA counterterrorist unit, which was immediately disbanded. Confused reports indicated that the act had been committed by a Lebanese unit, trained by the CIA, which had been formed in 1984 as President Reagan's answer to Hezbollah's international terrorist campaign. Hezbollah's response came on the 10th, when a truck loaded with explosives crashed into an Israeli military convoy, killing nine Israeli soldiers. The driver, a suicide bomber, had been shot dead at his wheel having planned to drive the truck Metulla in Israel.

REBELLION WITHIN THE LEBANESE FORCES

Meanwhile all was not well within the Lebanese Forces, now commanded by Samir Geaga. Geaga was at odds with the Falange Party, which he thought was far too pro-Syrian in its policy, and his protest arguments led to his expulsion from the party on 11 March 1985. The catalyst had been Geaga's refusal to hand over to the Lebanese army certain checkpoints held by the Lebanese forces in Beirut. President Gemayel called a Falange meeting on the 13th to denounced Geaga and establish a 'mediation committee'. Geaga failed to attend the meeting. President Assad of Syria quickly stepped into the breach, giving total support to President Gemayel and moving Syrian troops into the area just north of Beirut, adjacent to the Christian area.

The result was an armed clash between those in the Lebanese Forces militia who supported Geaga and those who supported the Falange Party's official line. The clash took place in East Beirut, in the Metn hills and in one or two other areas held by this militia. The Lebanese army seized the opportunity to step in to occupy as many Lebanese Forces militia checkpoints in East Beirut as possible.

The split within the Lebanese Forces deepened when Geaga demanded the removal of the Lebanese Forces from the Falange political leadership.

As it seemed as though President Gemayel might make concessions, Geaga attended a mediation committee meeting. He demanded that a democratically elected Christian national council be established, and that the Falange Party's political power over the Lebanese Forces be removed, but Syria would not permit this. Further discussions simply deepened the rift, which was further intensified by fighting in Sidon between the Lebanese Forces and Muslim militias. In Sidon, Lebanese Forces militia units, under Geaga's command, attacked Lebanese army Muslim units, causing a flight of Muslim families from part of that city. A brief ceasefire was broken by an intensive artillery bombardment on part of Sidon by Geaga's guns and mortars, and also in the PLO-held part of the nearby Ain Helweh refugee camp.

An allied group of Amal, Druse, Mourabitoun and PLO militias mounted counterattacks against Geaga's militia units. These were mostly artillery duels and lasted into April, during which time elements of the Lebanese army reinforced the garrison in Sidon. On the 22nd Geaga declared a truce, withdrawing his Lebanese Forces units from the Sidon area to the Christian town of Jezzine, and some to Beirut. A large-scale exodus of Christian families followed in their wake, some 60 000 refugees reaching Jezzine by the end of the month. Both Berri and Jumblatt agreed not to attack Jezzine, but demanded that the Israeli-backed SLA units in the area be replaced by Lebanese army troops.

The advancing Muslim militias captured the town of Jaye and then Falangist positions along the road to Kharoub, and by 29 April they had reached SLA positions in Kfar Felous, just west of Jezzine. As the militias advanced, abandoned Christian homes were looted and Amal arranged for them to be reserved for Shia families from the poorer parts of South Beirut.

Meanwhile, on 24 March in Beirut the first serious outburst of Christian–Muslim clashes since January broke out just after President Gemayel returned from visiting President Assad in Damascus. The clashes continued spasmodically

into April, spreading gradually into the hills to the south-east of Beirut, where Christians and Druse were still fighting artillery duels. In May the fighting in Beirut intensified, especially across the Green Line, and also flared up again in Souk al-Gharb. By the 7th, Amal militia had advanced across the Green Line into East Beirut, countered by Christian artillery barrages, one of which struck the central criminal courts and all the legal records were destroyed. The Christians continued to lose ground and called for an end to the fighting.

REORGANISATION

Meanwhile, on 18 April Rashid Karami again tendered his resignation, complaining that the 'national unity government' project had failed, but after talks with Muslim leaders and the Syrians he was persuaded to remain in office. The Lebanese Front was formalised, with Camille Chamoun as leader. On 10 May Geaga was replaced as commander of the Lebanese Forces militia by Elie Hobeika, who was thought to be more pro-Syrian than Geaga. On the 15th, Christian leaders formed the 'Christian Coalition for a United Lebanon', its purpose being to seek a dialogue with the Lebanese Muslim leadership. Jumblatt refused to respond, owing to Hobeika's supposed involvement in the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Hobeika announced that he was closing down the Lebanese Forces liaison office in Jerusalem, and offered to withdraw all his militiamen from southern Lebanon. On 22 May 1985 a car bomb prematurely exploded in the crossroad town of Chtaura, killing over 50 people, including several schoolchildren.

9 The Syrians Return: 1985–87

On 20 May 1985 the Amal militia, aided by the Lebanese (Muslim) 6th Brigade, attacked PLO militias in the Sabra Shatila and Bourj al-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut, with the declared intention of eliminating the PLO presence from Lebanon. For a fortnight there was violent fighting, some of it at close quarters. The PLO remained divided into the pro-Arafat faction and the opposing Palestinian National Salvation Front (PNSF), the latter being supported by Syria and based in Damascus. Most of the PLO members in the camps were loyal to Arafat, and as the fighting developed, whenever possible members of the PNSF militias joined them in defiance of Amal, so the division became blurred. During this conflict the Druse watched carefully, but did not join in the fray.

Although Amal and the 6th Brigade had more powerful weapons than the PLO, including artillery and tanks, their advance was countered by fierce Palestinian resistance, the defenders being able to take advantages of the network of tunnels and underground bunkers that had been constructed in the camps. Many of the estimated 120 000 inhabitants of the three camps fled into Druse-controlled territory.

The battle area was closed off to the media, and Red Cross vehicles were prevented from entering the camps to take the wounded to hospital. Soon reports of atrocities and massacres began to filter out, committed by both sides, although Amal, which suffered the greatest proportion of casualties, seemed to get most of the blame. Horror stories emerged of grenades being thrown into makeshift medical centres and wounded being dragged from operating tables. Later evidence substantiated many of these rumours.

Amal's attack was condemned by all PLO factions, and the PNSF appealed to Syria for military help to halt Amal's extermination policy, but President Assad chose to sit back

and watch – in the past he had given considerable help to Amal. Arafat accused Amal of a secret alliance with Israel. On 31 May 1985 a UN Security Council resolution condemned this violence against a civilian population and called for a ceasefire. A few days later the Arab League too called for a ceasefire.

By the 31st Amal and the 6th Brigade were in possession of the Sabra and Shatila camps, although spasmodic resistance continued as PLO fighters were able to reemerge from their tunnels in areas previously cleared by Amal, which continued to pound the camp areas with artillery and tank fire, razing buildings to the ground. The major part of the Bourj al-Barajneh camp remained in the hands of the PLO. Despite several attempts by Syria to persuade Amal to stop fighting, these efforts foundered on the Palestinians' demand to be allowed to retain their weapons until all the other militia groups had been disarmed.

AMAL–PLO CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

Eventually, on 18 June Abdul Halim Khaddam, the prominent Syrian negotiator, persuaded Amal and the PNSF to sign an agreement to end the hostilities. Under the terms of the agreement the Palestinians could retain their light weapons on condition they surrendered their medium and heavy ones when other militias began to surrender theirs. The agreement recognised the PNSF as the sole representative of all Palestinians in Lebanon, the Syrians successfully pushing Arafat aside. Security within the three camps was to be the responsibility of the Lebanese gendarmerie. However, while the differences between the two PLO factions had been blurred somewhat, PLO infighting rumbled on, with the majority of Palestinians in and around Beirut remaining pro-Arafat and those in the Bekaa Valley being pro-PNSF.

The siege of the camps was lifted on 22 June 1985, after which it was estimated that the casualty list amounted to 640 dead and over 500 wounded. The destruction of Sabra and Shatila were almost complete, and tens of thousands more Palestinians were homeless. At the same time,

in the Tripoli area in the north there was reactionary fighting between Amal and PLO elements.

Relations between the Druse PSP and the PLO in the Beirut areas seemed to improve for pragmatic reasons – the PSP still controlled the small port of Khalde, which permitted the passage of arms and ammunition from Libya into the Palestinian camps – while in the south, PLO groups were forming loose alliances with Shia Muslims and Hezbollah.

Fresh fighting broke out around the Bourg al-Barajneh refugee camp in early September, the Palestinians accusing Amal of massacring a number of civilians. The fighting lasted for several days, until a ceasefire was arranged in Damascus between the leaders of Amal and the PNSF. This was followed by reports that Palestinian civilians living outside the camps in the Beirut area were being harassed by Amal, that many were being forced from their homes and a number kidnapped.

CONTINUED ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL

During late May and early June 1985 the majority of Israeli troops were withdrawn from Lebanon, generally meeting the promised deadline of 6 June, but several thousand soldiers and members of Shin Bet remained in Israel's newly declared security zone. The amended Israeli military casualty figures, including those incurred during the 1982 invasion, were quoted as 654 killed and 3800 wounded (Israeli spokesman).

The Israelis constructed strong fortifications for the SLA and bunkers for its tanks and guns, which were frequently attacked by Amal and other Muslim militias. There was also friction between the SLA and UNIFIL, the latter refusing to recognise the SLA as a legitimate militia. In June, President Gemayel appealed to the UN Security Council to put pressure on Israel to withdraw the SLA from Jezzine, where Christians had been besieged since April. The SLA continued to have a defection problem, and at one stage its relative ineffectiveness caused Israel to try to persuade UNIFIL to cooperate with Amal against the PLO militias.

Israel staged several raids into southern Lebanon against villages suspected of harbouring Shia or Palestinian guerrillas, while both Israeli forces and the SLA frequently shelled such villages. On 10 June, for example, Israel launched a helicopter raid on a Palestinian base after Katyusha rockets had been fired into northern Israel. On another occasion, in September, Israelis clashed with Amal militiamen in Bint Jabail, losing a helicopter in the fighting. The SLA also suffered several suicide attacks, one near Jezzine on 15 August, in which it lost 15 men.

AIRCRAFT HIJACKING

Spectacular aircraft hijackings had so far been a speciality of extreme Palestinian resistance groups, although a few unsuccessful ones had been instigated by the 'Sons of Imam Sadr', an Amal code name. One such occurred on 11 June 1985, when a Jordanian airliner was hijacked by Shia gunmen calling themselves the 'Imam Sadr Brigade'. The airline eventually landed at Beirut airport, where the hijackers demanded that all Palestinians should leave the refugee camps in Lebanon. The passengers were disembarked, the aircraft was blown up and the hijackers disappeared into adjacent Amal-held territory.

The first major hijacking by the Iranian-backed Hezbollah began on 14 June and lasted until the 30th, many of the events being recorded live by international TV cameramen. The hijacked plane was a US TWA aircraft with 153 people on board. When it landed at Beirut airport the Shia hijackers demanded the release of Shia internees from the Israeli Atlit internment camp. At Beirut more terrorists boarded the plane, which then flew off to Algiers, and then returned. One American passenger was killed. After yet another flight to Algiers the plane again returned to Beirut, where the remaining hostages (some having been already released in small batches) were taken off and hidden by Amal in West Beirut. Eventually their release was secured by President Assad of Syria and Nabih Berri, who although not involved in this incident, was drawn into the negotiations

as the leader of Amal. Israel quietly released a number of detainees from Atlit and other prisons.

WESTERN HOSTAGES

Several Westerners in Lebanon were kidnapped during this period and in the months ahead considerable international media coverage was devoted to their plight. Of the various groups that indulged in hostage taking, Hezbollah was the main culprit, but there were a number of divisions within this umbrella organisation. A great cloud of secrecy descended on the mechanics of the problem. Varying demands were made for the release of the hostages, responsibility being disguised by code names, and there were also many multiple claims. International concern for the fate of Western hostages heavily overshadowed Lebanon's problems.

Lawrence Jenco, an American priest and head of the Catholic Relief Services in Beirut, was kidnapped in Beirut on 8 January 1985, and on the 14th al-Jihad al-Islami claimed it was holding five Americans, including William Buckley (station head of the CIA in Beirut), who was eventually tortured to death by his captors. It became a long, frustrating, much publicised saga.

Another case of note was the kidnapping of four Soviet diplomats in Beirut on 30 September, for which the Soviet-backed PNSF blamed Amal. One of the hostages was later found dead in the city. In October the Druse militia mounted a guard on the Soviet embassy to ward off a threatened suicide bombing in protest against the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan. The three surviving hostages were freed on 30 October.

Kidnapping also remained a much used tactic by local militias and others for insurance purposes, for exchange or for vengeance. Many individuals simply disappeared. In early January 1985 relatives of kidnap victims erected blockades across roads leading into Beirut, criticising the failure of the government committee established in July 1984 to deal with this problem. Prime Minister Karami announced a new government programme, which included the participation of the Red Cross.

Sporadic fighting across the Green Line occurred in May, mainly between the Falange and Amal, but also between Amal and the Druse militia. The fighting eventually died down, but erupted again on 11 June as a result of tacit Druse support of the Palestinians in the battle for the three refugee camps. The Mourabitoun became allied to the Druse and the PLO. It became obvious that some militia leaders did not have full control over their own forces in this period owing largely to changing allegiances, as many militiamen broke ranks to fight for old causes and against old enemies.

SECURITY COORDINATION COMMITTEE

On 7 July 1985 Karami admitted that his government was more or less defunct and invited Syrian troops to restore order. Assad's response was only partial, but on the 11th Karami was able to announce the formation of a seven-member security coordination committee, to be assisted by Syrian officers, for the purpose of supervising the collection of arms from the militias and the closure of militia offices in Beirut. At the committee's first meeting, on the 15th, it was decided to form a task force, composed of police and units of the 6th Brigade, to be responsible for security in West Beirut, and the following day several militia offices were closed.

On the 17th Syrian military observers arrived and called for volunteers to remove militia flags and slogans from buildings, although there was some resistance to this. The cleansing task force then swept through the campuses of the American University and the University Hospital, removing barriers. On the 30th Syria gave Amal 40 Soviet tanks.

NATIONAL UNITY FRONT

After talks in Chtaura between Nabih Berri, several Muslim militia leaders and individual VIPs, on 6 August 1985 the formation of a 'National Unity Front' was announced, which called for an end to existing Lebanese power-sharing

arrangements, new elections, an affirmation of Lebanon's Arab identity and the reestablishment of the Lebanese army, with a 'combat creed against the Zionist enemy'. On the 8th President Gemayel told President Assad that he was in favour of political reform.

This was followed on the 11th by several days of fighting across the Green Line, during which artillery and mortar fire fell on residential areas. A car bomb exploded in a Christian district on the 14th, killing 15 people and injuring over 120, and in a similar explosion on the 17th another 55 died. The Christians reacted by exploding car bombs in Muslim areas, responsibility being claimed by the 'Black Brigades'. This fighting disrupted civilian transport into Beirut, which began to experience a shortage of food and other necessary commodities.

Another wave of kidnapping developed in Beirut, involving both Christians and Muslims in what appeared to be attempts to ethically cleanse certain areas. Over 50 cases of abduction were reported to the police during August – more went unreported. Further Amal–PLO clashes took place in early September, the PSP allying itself with the Palestinians. Further afield, on 4 September a car bomb caused heavy casualties in Zahle, and Syrian troops moved into that town to take charge of its security. Elie Hobeika, commanding the Lebanese Forces, rushed to Damascus to talk to President Assad.

On 7 September 1985 a cabinet meeting was held – the first for some months – to discuss peace arrangements, but Berri and Jumblatt were absent. The Druse and Sunnis were accused of destroying Christian villages in the Sidon area that had been abandoned in the April and May Muslim advances, including a large hospital. On 29 October the tiny Baath Party militia withdrew from its position on the Green Line, which was taken as a hopeful sign of a first step towards general withdrawal, but no other groups followed suit. On 12 November in East Beirut a suicide bomber attacked a Christian monastery where members of the Lebanese Front were meeting. Four people were killed, and Elie Karameh, Camille Chamoun and his son Dany were among the injured.

On 20 November a bout of fighting erupted between the

Mourabitoun and Amal, the latter supported by the 6th Brigade and the PSP. The fighting lasted four days, during which time 65 people were killed and about 300 wounded. Lebanese national flags and other insignia were in full display ready for Lebanon's National Day, which the Druse were trying to tear down. In this fighting it was noted that, unusually, some Sunnis were siding with the Druse. Sporadic clashes between Christian and Muslim groups continued across the Green Line into December. A general strike was staged on the 12th in West Beirut in protest against the continuing violence.

PEACE AGREEMENT: DECEMBER 1985

A peace agreement, negotiated by Abdul Halim Khaddam of Syria, was signed in Damascus on 28 November 1985 by Berri of Amal, Jumblatt of the PSP, and Hobeika of the Lebanese Forces militia. The text was not released, but it was reported that it was in two parts, one concerning the ending of the Lebanese Civil War and the other dealing with political reform. A ceasefire was to come into effect on 30th, all militias were to disarm and disband within a year, and the Lebanese government could call upon Syrian troops for assistance in the event of renewed fighting.

The political part catered for the creation of a 280-member governing body comprising equal numbers of Christians and Muslims, headed by six ministers from the main communities, whose decisions would be subject to ratification by the National Assembly. The president's powers would be reduced and he would no longer chair executive meetings, but would retain the right to appoint the prime minister and the army commander.

The Iranian-backed Hezbollah, now a malignant power in Lebanon, rejected the agreement outright, saying that it served only Israel. Christian leaders, who felt they had been sidelined, regarded the project doubtfully. On 31 December 1985 the motorcades of both President Gemayel and Elie Hobeika were attacked by supporters of and protesters against the peace agreement, and in the resultant fighting over 25 people were killed.

On 8 January 1986 the Lebanese Sunnis accepted the Syrian-brokered peace agreement, but the Falange Party did not. On the 13th Hobeika ordered his Lebanese Forces militia to attack positions in East Beirut that were held by the Falangists, now under the leadership of George Geaga, who was opposed to the peace agreement. The Falangists fought back successfully and recaptured territory they had briefly lost, territory that held the Voice of Lebanon Falangist radio station and the offices of its newspaper, *al-Amal*. Despite help from the PNSF, which had guns and mortars, Hobeika was trapped for a while in his HQ in the Karantina district but he managed to escape to France, from where he returned to Damascus on the 22nd.

Also in January, in the north clashes broke out in the Byblos and Bifkaya areas between Geaga's Lebanese Forces group and an alliance of the SNSP and the National Liberal Party's Marada, which remained loyal to Franjieh, who supported the December agreement. To the south, fighting broke out again between Amal and the PLO, which dragged on until a truce was arranged on 31 March. In New York the United States vetoed a UN resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from southern Lebanon, and condemning their acts of violence.

The National Unity Front, composed of Muslim and anti-Gemayel Christian leaders, announced on 18 January that it would impose a total boycott against President Amin Gemayel. The following day Berri and Jumblatt, both ministers in the Lebanese government, called for his removal as Lebanese president, this being seen as the only solution to end the deadlock, as to cooperate with him would amount to treason. Gemayel insisted on remaining in office, and later called a cabinet meeting to refer the Syrian-brokered peace agreement to the National Assembly, but only three cabinet ministers attended.

On 7 February 1986 General Mahmoud Abu Dirgham, the Druse Lebanese army chief of staff, supported by 13 senior Muslim officers, held a press conference in West Beirut: they called for the Lebanese army to remain neutral and to withdraw from internal flashpoints, claiming he had some support from senior Christian officers. An anti-Falange car-bombing campaign, assumed to be instigated by pro-Hobeika

extremists, began in East Beirut on 21 January, when an explosion at a Falangist office killed over 30 people. The Falangists stated a few days later that they had arrested the terrorist network responsible, but similar car bombings followed, still against Falangist offices. There were two on 12 February, another on the 24th and two more on 26 March, all causing a heavy loss of life. Similar incidents took place in the following months.

IN THE SOUTH

In February 1986 two Israeli soldiers were kidnapped from near Bint Jabail. Their Hezbollah captors, using the code name 'Islamic Resistance Front' as a cover, threatened to kill them unless certain prisoners held by Israel were freed. Israel instituted a massive search operation to recover its soldiers, but was unsuccessful, and the operation had to be called off. During March and April Israel conducted several air strikes against PLO targets in southern Lebanon, and occasionally bombarded the Ain Helweh and Mieh Mieh refugee camps near Sidon and others farther afield. Amal also moved against the LCP, whose militia had crept into southern Lebanon, clashing with it in February in Nabatiyeh and Zahrani. LCP resistance collapsed after a number of its committee members were captured and killed.

ARMENIAN INVOLVEMENT

In May 1986 the small Armenian community in Beirut was drawn into the violence again, being subjected to minor attacks in which several were killed and others kidnapped. The Armenian ASALA (Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia), a tough organisation that was experienced in international terrorism, threatened reprisals. Responsibility for the attacks on Armenians was claimed by the 'Independent Movement' (for the Liberation of Kidnap Victims), which was alleged to be holding a number of Armenian hostages. The group demanded that the Armenians end their support for the Falangist and Lebanese Forces militias,

otherwise an assault would be mounted against the Armenian community to drive it from West Beirut.

Both Lebanese and foreign schools staged a one-day strike on 14 April as a protest against the kidnapping of teachers, and government offices closed that day in sympathy. A similar strike was held when the Independent Movement threatened to kill a Lebanese teacher it was holding hostage. However on the 16th it released a few hostages as a goodwill gesture, demanding that in return the Lebanese Forces 'free the 2200 hostages it was holding'. Several religious VIPs in Beirut tried to persuade the militias to release their hostages, but to little avail.

SPRING AND SUMMER 1986

Intermittent clashes rumbled across Lebanon during the spring and summer of 1986. One outbreak of fighting around the Beirut Palestinian refugee camps during May and June lasted for over six weeks. During this period more than 170 people were killed in attacks by the Amal militia and the 6th Brigade, in which both artillery and tanks were brought into action. Many buildings in the camps had been strengthened and protected by reinforced concrete roofs, and walls had been erected to protect against blasts. The Palestinians had also laid in stocks of food and medical supplies, so they were able to hold on to their positions.

In the Bekaa Valley fighting occurred between the PNSF and Hezbollah units, but Syrian troops moved in to enforce a ceasefire, which brought them to within 10 miles of the Israeli – imposed security zone. In the north there were bouts of fighting between the PNSF and the Tawheed, but at the request of local leaders Syrian troops moved in to enforce a truce. A Syrian-brokered truce on 16 June brought Syrian troops into West Beirut, and as Amal withdrew the Lebanese army took over many of its positions. Amal and the PSP announced the closure of their militia offices in West Beirut.

SYRIAN SECURITY PLAN

At the end of June 1986 a special task force of 800 Lebanese soldiers and police, together with Syrian military observers, began to take over checkpoints in Beirut, especially along the Green Line, where the situation remained explosive. Over 100 armed men were arrested, and one was shot dead for refusing to halt when challenged. Syrian troops also took over some checkpoints, and by mid July the security plan seemed to be having some effect, although independent militias continued to clash with each other outside the area controlled by the Syrian military.

Violence occasionally disrupted periods of false calm, for example on 28 July in East Beirut at rush hour, a car-bomb explosion near a market killed 32 people and injured over 40. The following day some 25 people died in another car-bomb explosion, also in East Beirut. On the 30th Amal staged the public execution, by firing squad, of a man who was said to have confessed to plotting to blow up an Amal office in West Beirut. On 4 August the special task force moved into the southern sector of Beirut, whereupon the gunmen disappeared from the streets for a while, but reappeared as the task force declined in strength. There were other car bombings, the presumed objective being to undermine the Syrian-brokered security plan. Incidents across the Green Line increased.

There was continual fighting between Samir Geaga's (loyalist) Lebanese Forces units and Elie Hobeika's (rebel) ones, and on 10 August Hobeika drove Geaga from his HQ in Byblos, north of Beirut. On the same day Fuad Abu Nader, a former Falange militia commander and a supporter of Hobeika, was wounded in an assassination attempt. On the 14th pro-Geaga units, aided by the Lebanese army, recaptured the Falangist HQ in East Beirut, and also withstood attacks from Hobeika's units, mounted from West Beirut. On the 28th Colonel Khalil Kenaan, commander of the predominantly Christian 5th Brigade, was assassinated. He was said to be sympathetic to Hobeika and the Syrians. In early October a number of pro-Hobeika Falangist captives were executed by 'loyalists'. In June, Camille Chamoun, leader of the NLP and supporter of the Syrian security plan, was wounded in a car-bomb incident.

CABINET MEETING

The Lebanese cabinet met on 8 September 1986 for the first time since October 1985 on an abandoned racetrack near the Green Line. Posing as the 'Dialogue Committee', they called for a ceasefire and insisted that the Security Coordination Committee enforce this under Lebanese army supervision. It also entrusted three ministers to draw up a new national covenant, to replace the 1943 one, and also undertook to regain control over all ports operated illegally by militias: the government needed the customs dues.

RESISTANCE IN THE SOUTH

In southern and central Lebanon the Hezbollah militia was increasing its influence at the expense of Amal, which tended to be losing territory, while both continued to launch attacks against UNIFIL, the SLA and the Israelis. The SLA, for example, later admitted to the death of 84 of its number during 1986, and UNIFIL also took fatal casualties. In response Israel continued to raid Shia villages, making arrests, and also launched air strikes against Hezbollah and other resistance training camps. The Israelis estimated that there were now about 9000 Palestinian guerrilla fighters in Lebanon, some of whom had recently returned from Cyprus on the ferry service, allegedly through the Falangist-controlled port of Junieh.

AMAL AGAIN BESIEGES THE CAMPS

Clashes between PLO factions occurred in the Palestinian refugee camps near Tyre and Sidon in mid October 1985, but a ceasefire agreement on the 26th provided for the Palestinian fighters to be confined within the Mieh Mieh and Ain Helweh camps, while other Palestinian positions were taken over by the local Sunni 'Popular Liberation Army', which had stayed neutral throughout the interfactional fighting in the camps. The following month PLO militias near Sidon staved off an Amal attack and recaptured a number

of lost positions. This caused Jumblatt to warn the PLO that his Druse militia would move against the PLO if it took more territory by force.

Also in November, the Amal militia again attacked the Bourj al-Barajneh refugee camp. The fighting spread to the Sabra and Shatila camps, but died down after a few days. In early December, in retaliation for PLO gains in southern Lebanon, Amal forces tightened their siege on the three Beirut Palestinian camps, and then shelled them, while at the same time arresting a number of Palestinians living outside the camps. On 3 December Amal took possession of the small al-Bass refugee camp near Tyre (this camp was not defended by the PLO), ejected many of the inhabitants and burned many homes.

Iranian mediators managed to secure an agreement between the PLO and Amal, whereby the PLO would withdraw from newly captured positions in southern Lebanon, and in return Amal would lift its siege of the three camps in Beirut. However nothing changed as the Palestinians failed to withdraw from their new positions in the south, and Amal tightened its siege and periodically bombarded the camps. By the end of 1986 conditions in the camps were rapidly deteriorating as Amal was refusing to allow in food and medical supplies. The Palestinians claimed that more than 600 people were killed in the Sabra, Shatila and Bourj al-Barajneh camps between mid October and the end of December 1986.

TAWHEED LOSES OUT

In Tripoli on 18 December 1986 a Tawheed commander was arrested by Syrians. His men responded by killing 15 Syrian soldiers at a checkpoint, which brought down the wrath of the Syrians on the Tawheed. Aided by the Arab Democratic Party, the Lebanese Communist Party, the SNSP and the Baath militias, the Syrians decisively defeated the Tawheed. Many Tawheed militiamen were killed, others were arrested and the remainder scattered. This was a blow against the Islamic Unification Movement's military arm.

THE SIEGE OF THE CAMPS CONTINUES

The siege of the Shatila and Bourj al-Barajneh refugee camps in Beirut continued, during January 1987, as did that of Rashidiyah, near Sidon, which had been under siege since September 1986 in retaliation for the PLO seizure of Amal positions in and around Maghdousheh. The Sabra camp site had been reduced to rubble by this stage. Although Amal rigidly continued to refuse to allow food or other aid into the camps and starvation stared the defenders in the face, the Palestinian resistance remained strong. This caused the Amal militia to hesitate about initiating a major assault on the camps, and instead content itself with intermittent artillery and mortar barrages, which gradually demolished many buildings and caused heavy casualties. The PLO defenders of the two Beirut camps were supported by a PLO artillery section in the overlooking eastern hills, by agreement with Jumblatt.

A number of women and children who attempted to leave the Beirut camps, either to escape or to bring in food, were shot in the legs as a punitive deterrent. By February the situation had become so acute that, according to local media reports, a delegation of residents of the Bourj al-Barajneh camp approached their religious leaders to ask whether they could eat the flesh of human corpses as the supply of dogs, cats and mules was exhausted. One woman even set fire to herself and her children as she was unable to face death by starvation (*Le Monde*).

On 7 February a truck loaded with food and other supplies, with a volunteer crew of Palestinian anti-Arafat 'rebels', tried to reach the Bourj al-Barajneh camp, but all were killed in the attempt. Nabih Berri, the Amal leader, warned Walid Jumblatt, leader of the PSP (both were ministers in the Karami government), that he was playing with fire. On the 13th a food convoy trying to reach the camp was stopped by Amal gunfire. Among those killed was an Iranian embassy official, who had been driving one of the vehicles. Later that day, however, by arrangement between Amal and the Iranian embassy, a relief truck, also driven by an Iranian diplomat, was allowed through into the camp, and another relief vehicle was permitted to enter the Bourj

el-Brajneh camp on the 14th. In the Sidon area, also on the 14th, Amal lifted its siege on the Rashidiyah camp for two days to allow Red Cross relief vehicles to deliver food and medical supplies.

FIGHTING BETWEEN AMAL AND THE PSP

On 15 February 1987 in West Beirut, Jumblatt's PSP, aided by the SNSP, the LCP and the Mourabitoun, attacked the Amal militia, and in fighting that lasted some five days, drove it from most of its positions. This had begun when Amal attacked the LCP HQ, which had a small but well-armed, well-trained militia which resisted strongly. When the PSP militia came to its assistance, the fighting force broadened to include other militias under Jumblatt's influence. The LCP had just concluded its fifth congress, which had been attended by Jumblatt and a member of the Soviet Central Committee. Although Gorbachev had come to power in the Soviet Union in 1985, the Cold War was still in operation and the Soviets were still involved with Lebanon and the LCP. It seemed as though the USSR and Assad were combining to squeeze the United States out of the Lebanese equation. An LCP leader was assassinated on the 17th by an unknown assailant.

Syria frantically mediated between the various Lebanese faction leaders. It called for a ceasefire in West Beirut and worked to establish an observer force of Lebanese and Syrian troops, whose small mediating party became trapped in a seafront district for a while as a result of the fighting. The battle between Amal and Jumblatt's militias in West Beirut took some of the pressure off the two Palestinian camps, as Amal, which was losing the battle, had rapidly to redeploy its forces.

On 19 February the Shia leaders appealed for Syrian intervention, and on the 21st Prime Minister Karami made a formal request for a Syrian peacekeeping force. Berri and Jumblatt met in Damascus to discuss the details of handing over the security of Beirut to the Syrians, to which Jumblatt only agreed with reluctance.

Meanwhile, on the 18th a number of women and children

had been allowed to leave the Bourj al-Barajneh camp, and some of the wounded had been evacuated. On the 27th a UN convoy was allowed to take food into the Shatila camp, but Amal first removed all the medical supplies from the convoy owing to Amal's own dire need.

THE SYRIANS TAKE OVER BEIRUT

On 22 February 1987 two Syrian brigades, amounting to some 7000 soldiers, supported by 60 tanks and heavy armoured vehicles, entered West Beirut while a Syrian artillery detachment positioned itself in the overlooking hills to the east of the city. The Syrian commander stated that he had come to take over the security of West Beirut, to extend his deployment southwards, and to secure the release of all hostages and captives. The Syrian troops did not enter East Beirut, nor move southwards initially. In general the soldiers were welcomed by the inhabitants of Beirut, especially the civilians. President Gemayel declared that the Syrian move was unconstitutional, but later came to accept it, while the Arafat 'mainstream' PLO denounced it, criticising the Syrians' failure to lift the siege on the refugee camps. What was certain, the Syrians' entry into West Beirut had saved Amal from complete defeat.

By the 23rd Syrian soldiers had taken control of all West Beirut, and during the next couple of days they closed down 75 militia offices. Several militiamen, who defied instructions not to carry arms in public were shot dead, and others were arrested. At first it was said that Druse were being singled out for harsh Syrian treatment, but later the Syrian military occupation became more evenhanded. On the 24th some 1500 members of the Druse and LCP militias were evacuated under escort into the eastern hills area, and Syrian checkpoints were established along the Green Line.

Syrian troops soon clashed with the Hezbollah militia, which had built up its strength in West Beirut. On the 24th Syrian troops entered the Bourj Hammond district, part of which was dominated by Hezbollah. The troops attacked the Hezbollah HQ, killing 26 people – 18 Hezbollah

militiamen, five women and three Amal members – but accounts vary on precisely what happened. Hezbollah mustered huge crowds for the funerals, showing their real strength in Beirut for the first time and revealing the Islamic fundamentalist thrust of its programme. Previously, on 12 February in the Basta district of West Beirut, the members of a Lebanese–Syrian patrol had been taken prisoner by Hezbollah. The Syrians were more than a little wary of Hezbollah.

On 1 March in the south there was some Amal infighting when Hassan Hashem (a former chairman of Amal who had been dismissed in 1986), supported by a breakaway section, seized control of Amal positions between Sidon and Tyre. Berri used strong-arm tactics to restore unity and discipline, dismissing several Amal commanders and imprisoning others.

THE SYRIAN MILITARY REGIME

During March 1987 the Syrian security force consolidated its hold over West Beirut and concentrated on bringing Amal and Hezbollah to heel. On the 4th the Syrians ordered Amal to free over 800 Palestinians detained in the militia's prison in the Rizk Tower, one of the main Amal strongholds in the city. Pressure was also brought to bear against fundamentalist symbolism, for example beards were discouraged, as was the wearing of the *chadour* by women, while flags and graffitti were removed. The Iranian government, anxious that Hezbollah should not be disarmed, restricted itself for the time being to expresing concern over the Syrian attitude towards Hezbollah in Beirut.

Due to the presence of the Syrian security forces the level of violence in West Beirut was reduced, but occasional shootings and explosions still occurred, some against Syrians. For example a rocket attack was launched against a Syrian checkpoint on 25th. The three men said to be responsible were executed in public the following day. On the 28th a car-bomb explosion outside a hotel used by the Syrian military killed eight people. It was not until April that Syrian troops moved into the devastated, decrepit, mainly Shia-

inhabited southern suburbs, which had become a stronghold not only of Amal but also of Shia fundamentalists, and where it was believed that a number of Western hostages – still attracting great international publicity – were being held. Syrian troops then moved southwards to enter Sidon on the 14th.

THE REFUGEE CAMPS

The Syrian security force regarded the besieged Palestinian refugee camps with caution and hesitation, and it was not until 5 April that they managed to obtain a ceasefire between Amal and the PLO. The following day UN and Red Cross relief convoys entered the Shatila and Bourj al-Barajneh camps, whereupon the wounded were evacuated and women and children were allowed to leave. Syrian troops entered Shatila on the 7th and Bourg al-Barajneh on the 8th, where they retained a skeleton presence. Amal militiamen continued to surround the camps and to check incoming vehicles. UN and Red Cross vehicles were allowed through, but extra food purchased by or for the Palestinians was often confiscated.

On 27 April 1987 Hezbollah announced that it was abandoning its informal alliance with the PLO because of Arafat's decision to campaign for an international Middle East peace conference: Hezbollah was not in the business of working for peace. Later, on 24 May, an attempt was made to assassinate the leader of the detachment of Iranian revolutionary Guards in Tyre, and on the 27th a Hezbollah activist was wounded in a car-bomb explosion in Beirut.

Meanwhile, on 9 April an anti-Arafat PNSF delegation arrived at the Ain Helweh camp near Sidon to discuss a ceasefire and the introduction of Syrian military observation officers, but nothing positive emerged. The Sunni Popular Liberation Army, which had tried to remain neutral throughout the PLO internal split, remained deployed as a buffer force between Amal and the PLO in the area to the south of Sidon.

CABINET MEETING

A Lebanese cabinet meeting was held on 23 April on the Green Line. All the ministers but Jumblatt attended and agreed to establish a department to deal with those displaced by the fighting. They also demanded the reopening of the airport, which had been closed on 6 February due to insurance cover being withdrawn: the airport was eventually reopened on 10 May. There was Muslim criticism of the Lebanese Forces militias, who were constructing their own airstrip at Halat, north of Beirut, and were incorporating a section of the coastal road as part of the runway. The demand for the return to government control of ports in militia hands was repeated, as nothing had yet been done about it.

President Gemayel had earlier agreed to the main points of the latest Syrian plan for political reform in Lebanon, which would curtail his presidential authority and form the basis of a change to the confessional system.

KARAMI RESIGNS

Prime Minister Rashid Karami once again submitted his resignation on 4 May, stating that the events taking place in Lebanon were against the interests of his country, and that reconciliation between East and West Beirut was not possible. He had recently been criticised by Jumblatt and Samir Geaga. President Gemayel and others tried to persuade him to carry on, but this time he was determined to go. However he would continue in office until a new prime minister was nominated. The Chamber of Deputies met on the 21st, when the 49 deputies present unanimously abrogated the Cairo Agreement of 1969, which regulated the presence of the PLO in Lebanon, and also the May 1983 Accord with Israel, which had already been cancelled by the cabinet in March 1984.

THE ASSASSINATION OF KARAMI

Rashid Karami died on 2 June 1987 when a bomb exploded in the helicopter in which he was returning to Beirut from his home in Tripoli after the Ramadan holiday; others in the helicopter were injured. President Gemayel appointed former Prime Minister Selim Hoss as acting prime minister. Multiple claims of responsibility for the death of Karami were made.

It was believed that the bomb had been put on board the army helicopter before it left its base, and that it had been timed to explode after Karami had boarded. Much later (16 July) a Christian army technician at the helicopter base was arrested and charged with 'facilitating' Karami's death. The main suspects were hard-line Christian elements wanting to sabotage the Syrian-proposed Lebanese reform plan, which Karami favoured: Karami had recently been denounced by Falangists as a 'citizen of Syria'.

IN THE SOUTH

During the first half of 1987 the events in southern Lebanon continued much as before, with Israelis and the SLA periodically clashing with the 'National Resistance', as the PLO groups were becoming known, and the 'Islamic Resistance', as the Hezbollah units came to be called. The PLO occasionally fired Katyusha rockets into northern Israel, and Israel responded by launching air strikes on guerrilla bases and training camps. The SLA occasionally clashed with UNIFIL, while the situation around Maghdousheh and the divided PLO-held Rashidiyah refugee camp remained unresolved.

10 Two Lebanese Governments: 1987–89

On 22 July 1987 a new pro-Syrian Lebanese Muslim alliance was formed: the Unification and Liberation Front, whose aims were to achieve political reform in Lebanon and end sectarian divisions. It included the Druse Progressive Socialist Party, the (mainly Sunni) Popular Organisation, the Lebanese Communist Party, the (Syrian-supported, Alawite) Arab Democratic Party and the Baath Party.

The Christian militias and parties seemed less united, and there was strife within the Falangist-dominated Lebanese Front between those supporting the Falangist leader, George Saadeh, who was openly hostile to Syria, and those who favoured some sort of accommodation with Syria. The latter group included Elie Hobeika (the former commander of the Lebanese Forces militia, who had been deposed in January 1986 after signing the Syrian-mediated peace accord with the Muslim militias) and another former militia commander, Fuad Abu Nader. On 25 September Elie Hobeika was wounded in a bomb attack near his HQ in Zahle, in Syrian-controlled territory.

The following month Samir Geaga, the current commander of the Lebanese Forces militia, began mobilising his units to support Saadeh in the event of a military attempt to displace him. Although armed Syrian intervention in Beirut in February had ended most of the fighting in the city, occasional factional clashes continued, notably between rival Christian and Muslim militias across the Green Line, along which demonstrations were held by interconfessional groups campaigning against violence in general.

In late September the first clash between the Amal militia and Syrians occurred when a street battle erupted in West Beirut: two Syrian soldiers were killed. Later, local attacks were made on Syrian patrols. In November there were two suicide bombings in Beirut: one at the airport on the 11th, which killed five people and injured over 50;

and the other at the American University Hospital on the 15th, which killed seven and injured more than 70. In each instance the bomb was believed to have been carried in a suitcase by a woman, who was killed in the explosion. The Falangists blamed extremist Maronites.

Previously, in August, fresh fighting had broken out between Amal and PLO groups around the Ain Helweh and Mieh Mieh Palestinian refugee camps near Sidon. The fighting continued until 11 September, when an agreement was reached that the PLO groups would withdraw from their positions in the hills to the east of Sidon, which they had just seized from Amal, if Amal would lift its pressure on the camps. The fighting erupted again in October, when for the first time the (Sunni) Popular Liberation Army militia, which had formed a buffer between the two sides, was drawn into the conflict on the PLO side. In October there were clashes between Amal and the Druse PSP in the hills to the east of Beirut (the two had been allies until the PSP had intervened in the 'war of the camps' on the PLO side). The Amal–PLO battle spread into Beirut, flaring up around the Shatila camp.

During the second part of 1987 Hezbollah gained considerable influence and support in southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut, at the expense of Amal. Amal was unable to compete with this Iranian-financed organisation, which attracted the Shia poor by subsidising supermarkets and pharmacies and providing generous welfare benefits. The SLA commander complained that the Hezbollah fighters' pay was three times higher than that of his men. Amal and Hezbollah militiamen fought each other near Nabatiyeh in September.

The Israeli security zone in southern Lebanon, garrisoned by the South Lebanon Army, was frequently attacked by Hezbollah and the PLO. The Israelis usually replied with artillery barrages and air strikes, as well as the occasional ground attack on hostile bases. In September, at the request of the UN Childrens' Fund a three-day 'vaccination truce' was observed to enable UN medical staff to vaccinate children across the country. Some militias even used their own vehicles to transport children to the vaccination centres.

AMAL'S BLOCKADE OF THE CAMPS LIFTED

On 16 January 1988 Nabih Berri, the Amal leader, announced the end of the partial Amal blockade of the three Palestinian refugee camps (Shatila and Bourj al-Barajneh in Beirut, and Rashidiyah near Tyre), which he described as a goodwill gesture in support of the Palestinian Intifada (struggle), which had begun in December 1987 in the Israeli Occupied Territories. The Amal militiamen withdrew from the fringes of the Beirut camps on the 20th and from Rashidiyah on the 24th. Syrian troops immediately rushed into the vacated positions. The PLO complained that Syrian intelligence agents were trying to identify Palestinians loyal to Arafat in order to arrest them.

Syrian troops did not enter the camps, but encouraged the spasmodic strife within them between rival Palestinian militias. At first the pro-Arafat factions were dominant and Abu Musa's 'rebels' were pushed to the edges of the camps, barely retaining a foothold. In April the situation was reversed when the Abu Musa rebels, supported by Syrian artillery, recovered and fought back successfully, causing Arafat to rush off to Damascus to meet President Assad for the first time in five years. However Arafat and Assad had little to say to each other.

The pro-Arafat PLO militias fought back as long as they could in the Shatila camp, but had to surrender on 27 June. The following day '400 civilians and 96 fighters' (Radio Lebanon) emerged from Shatila's network of tunnels to be transported, under Libyan escort, to camps in the Sidon area. The battle continued in the Bourj al-Barajneh camp, which fell to Abu Musa's men on 8 July, the survivors also being moved to the Sidon area. This meant that Arafat no longer had a significant military presence in Lebanon.

AMAL VERSUS HEZBOLLAH

Relations between Amal and the Hezbollah militias became strained, largely as the result of Hezbollah's success at gaining Shia support in Lebanon. For some time the Iranian

government had wanted to dominate the international kidnapping scene in Lebanon, which was attracting so much international attention. Indeed in August 1987 the Iranian speaker, Rafsanjani, had announced that the Iranian government would intercede on behalf of kidnapped foreigners held in Lebanon, on condition that the United States put pressure on both Israel and Kuwait to release Shias held for attacks against Israeli soldiers in Lebanon or for bomb attacks in Kuwait.

This had been rejected by the US government, but Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel said his government would examine any serious offer. A similar Iranian offer had been made in November 1986, but the United States had not wanted any truck with Iran and was busy demonising its government. The underlying Iranian reason was envy of Amal's successes, which Tehran saw as a barrier to bringing the Lebanese Shias under its wing.

Hezbollah avoided open conflict with Amal until 17 February 1988, when Colonel William Higgins, a US marine officer and head of the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), was kidnapped by Hezbollah gunmen while driving on a stretch of highway near Tyre that was nominally under Amal control, but was being actively contested by Hezbollah. Responsibility was claimed by the Organisation for the Oppressed of the World (a Hezbollah code name since 1985), which alleged that Higgins was a CIA spy. Working with UNIFIL, Amal sealed off the area around Tyre and mounted an extensive search. On the 23rd Amal announced that it had arrested the two Hezbollah kidnappers, but there was no firm news of Higgins for some time.

President Assad of Syria also came into the Amal–Hezbollah equation, as he was planning to install a pro-Syrian president in Lebanon when Amin Gemayel's tenure expired in September 1988. It was also in the interests of both Amal and the Lebanese Forces militia that the new president should curtail Hezbollah's influence in the country. Assad encouraged Amal to attack Hezbollah strongholds in southern Beirut, and at the same time stirred up conflict between the Lebanese Forces militia and the Lebanese army in East Beirut.

On 6 May Amal forces attacked Hezbollah positions in

the sprawling, shanty-town, refugee area of South Beirut known as 'Dahiya'. Amal managed to seize several Hezbollah positions, but within a couple of days Hezbollah, reinforced by a strong detachment of Iranian Revolutionary Guards from the Bekaa Valley, quickly reversed the situation, and by the 13th had seized control of the main airport road, which ran through Dahiya.

This alarmed the Syrian army group in Lebanon, and on the 14th it surrounded the Dahiya area with troops and tanks, bringing the hostilities to a momentary halt. This turn of events caused Syrian and Iranian representatives to meet in Beirut, ostensibly to work out a peace settlement. The Iranians did not want Syrian troops to move against Hezbollah militiamen, and the Syrians did not want Amal to be defeated. The talks collapsed on the 24th owing to the Iranian insistence that if Syrian troops entered the Dahiya area, so too would Iranian Revolutionary Guards. As many of the kidnapped Westerners were hidden within the Dahiya area the Iranians demanded a dominant say on this issue. Fighting was resumed, Hezbollah making gains at the expense of Amal.

A fresh round of Syrian–Iranian talks began, and on the 26th it was eventually agreed that only Syrian troops and Lebanese police would be deployed in Dahiya. The following day Syrian troops took up positions throughout Dahiya and all Amal and Hezbollah militiamen were ordered to withdraw, but they simply hid their weapons and remained where they were. Some prisoners were exchanged on the 31st.

DISBANDMENT OF THE AMAL MILITIA

On 3 June 1988 Nabih Berri announced the disbandment of all Amal militia units in all areas of Lebanon but the south, saying that henceforth Amal would devote its activities to 'political action and services', and urging his disbanded militiamen to join the regular Lebanese army's 6th (Shia) Brigade. Berri was always more of a politician than a military commander. This announcement was taken as an admission of Amal's defeat in South Beirut, and that

Berri's military authority in southern Lebanon had been diminished.

However, as a shrewd politician Berri only partially meant what he said. His Amal militia units remained active in the south, where in August Amal–Hezbollah clashes erupted again. On the 13th a Hezbollah cleric was assassinated near an Amal checkpoint, and on 22 September three senior Amal leaders were killed in an ambush. Tension remained high between the two organisations, and in November, after a failed Amal attempt to assassinate Hezbollah leaders, a bout of fighting between them necessitated Syrian troop intervention.

CAR BOMBS

Meanwhile factional groups were indulging in car-bombing, one of the first major examples being in Tripoli on 23 April 1988, when one exploded in a crowded street market, killing almost 70 people and injuring many more. No faction claimed responsibility, but pro-Syrian local politicians blamed the Lebanese Forces militia. On 30 May a car bomb exploded in East Beirut near a Falange office, killing 15 people and injuring about 70. Thereafter a number of car bombs were targeted at Syrian checkpoints.

ISRAELI SECURITY ZONE

Throughout 1988 Israel continued its policy of launching air attacks against 'terrorist' targets in Lebanon, mainly Palestinian groups in and around Sidon and farther afield, as well as Hezbollah camps in the Bekaa Valley. These air strikes were sometimes accompanied by ground attacks in southern Lebanon, while attacks on SLA personnel were countered with artillery fire. In early May Israel mustered some 2000 troops, supported by tanks and helicopter gunships, against 'terrorist' positions in an operation that lasted three days. This attracted controversy in Israel as it was alleged that the Israeli defence minister had ordered the exercise without prior cabinet approval.

On 19 October in the security zone a Hezbollah suicide bomber crashed an explosive-laden vehicle into a convoy, killing eight Israeli soldiers. In anticipation of an Israeli ground assault, Hezbollah mobilised its fighters in the Bekaa Valley and threatened to execute two Israelis soldiers it had captured in February 1986. The Israeli response came on the 21st, consisting of wide-ranging air strikes that killed about 15 people and injured nearly 40.

FAILURE TO ELECT A LEBANESE PRESIDENT

Meanwhile a considerable constitutional crisis was rapidly approaching. President Amin Gemayel's tenure, which had begun in 1982, was due to end in September and he was reluctant to relinquish his position. The National Assembly should have met to elect a successor at least three months prior to the changeover date, but attempts to convene a session for this purpose had been thwarted. The speaker again summoned the National Assembly to meet on 18 August to elect a new president.

On 16 September 1988 Sulieman Franjieh (president 1970–76), who was sympathetic towards Syria, had put his name forward for election, but the Lebanese Forces had objected, describing him as a 'confrontational candidate' whose elevation would return the country to a state of war. Samir Geaga, commanding the Lebanese Forces militia, declared there would be no quorum in the National Assembly unless Franjieh withdrew his candidacy. The personal feud between Geaga and Franjieh remained deep and bitter, it being suspected that Geaga had been behind the assassination of most of the Franjieh family, including his son Tony, back in 1978.

Assad's support for Franjieh surprised many Maronite deputies, who in the run-up to the election had made it plain they would vote against him, which had developed after Syrian–US talks aimed at finding a consensus candidate had faltered. However the Syrian decision brought about a reconciliation between Geaga and General Michel Aoun, the Lebanese army commander. They had been estranged for some two years, during which time their

respective forces had grated against each other, and indeed in May 1988 there had nearly been a full-scale confrontation between them.

On the 18th Lebanese Forces militiamen began to intimidate several deputies residing in East Beirut, and even briefly detained some to prevent them from attending the National Assembly session, to be held in a temporary building near the museum crossing point on the Green Line. Only 38 deputies attended to vote, 13 short of the necessary quorum. Accordingly Speaker Hussein al-Husseini adjourned the session. Another attempt was made to elect a new president and the deputies were summoned to meet on 22 September, this time in the original National Assembly building in West Beirut. There was a sense of urgency as it was thought that as a final act President Amin Gemayel, due to stand down on that date, would announce the formation of a transitional cabinet headed by a Maronite.

The Syrian–US talks had been resumed on the 13th, when both had agreed to support Michel Daher, a Christian deputy, but he was rejected by Geaga and General Aoun. Another possible candidate was Raymond Edde, leader of the National Bloc, who had been in self-imposed exile in France since 1976. On the 21st President Gemayel visited Assad in Damascus, returning to Lebanon on the same day in order to travel to Bhirka, seat of the Maronite patriarch, who had been trying to persuade a gathering of Christian deputies gathered there to vote for Daher. Meanwhile Geaga, Aoun and other Christian leaders, unaware of Gemayel's visit to Damascus, had met together and agreed to denounce any candidate supported by Syria or the United States.

On the 22nd, deputies living in East Beirut were reluctant to cross the Green Line and venture into West Beirut for the National Assembly session. When it became obvious that very few deputies were going to arrive, the speaker adjourned the session without a ballot taking place, which meant there would not be a legal president in office after midnight. Realising that the presidential powers could fall by default into the hands of the Muslim prime minister, Selim Hoss, until a new president could be elected, certain Christian leaders entered into unsuccessful negotiations with

Hoss to form a cabinet under a Maronite prime minister who could be relied upon to defend Christian interests, or even to increase the Christian representation in the cabinet.

A few minutes before the midnight deadline President Gemayel, as a last legal act and reputedly under pressure from Geaga and Dany Chamoun, issued a decree appointing General Aoun (a Christian) as prime minister, contrary to the Accord of 1943, to head a six-man military cabinet of three Christians and three Muslims. This was denounced by Muslim and pro-Syrian groups, who issued statements pledging continued support for the Hoss cabinet, which had been virtually paralysed since January 1986 after he and his Syrian-backed colleagues had imposed a political boycott on President Gemayel.

TWO GOVERNMENTS

On 23 September 1988 General Aoun quickly announced the composition of his military cabinet. Hoss refused to stand down, and so Lebanon now had two conflicting governments. On 26 September Aoun and Hoss each met several foreign ambassadors in Beirut in the hope of obtaining exclusive recognition from their countries, but all were waiting for the situation to resolve itself. Iraq, the recent victor of the eight-year Iran–Iraq war, was the first country to recognise (on 8 October) the anti-Syrian Aoun government. This coincided with Lebanese press reports that Iraq was supplying large amounts of arms to the Lebanese Forces militia. During the Iran–Iraq war, Syria had generally supported Iran against its conventional enemy, Iraq.

MILITIA MERGERS

As ex-President Amin Gemayel prepared for a sojourn in Europe, he divested himself of his power base, and on 4 October, by agreement, his personal militia, based in the Upper Metn area, was absorbed into the Lebanese Forces militia. This provided a boost to Geaga, its commander, as it gave him control of a strategical area on the southern

fringe of the Maronite enclave. On 9 November Adel Osseiran, defence minister in the Hoss cabinet, dismissed General Aoun from his post of commander of the Lebanese army, replacing him with General Samir al-Khataib, a Sunni Muslim. This was in contravention of the 1943 accord, which decreed that the holder should be a Maronite Christian.

AMAL–HEZBOLLAH CONFLICT

On 1 January 1989 fighting broke out in southern Beirut between Amal and Hezbollah militias. The fighting spread quickly across the country, reaching as far as the Iklim al-Tuffah area adjacent to the Israeli security zone, the last major Hezbollah stronghold in central-southern Lebanon. Tension between the two had increased since the signing of the Amal–PLO peace agreement in December 1988, the fresh impetus coming from the Iranian government, which was eager to capitalise on the rapidly changing situation.

In the Iklim al-Tuffah area on the 7th, Hezbollah launched a surprise operation against a string of Shia villages, carrying out what was described as a series of 'house-to-house massacres' (Radio Lebanon). More than 80 people were killed before Amal regained control. In Beirut fighting between these two militias was curbed to some extent by the presence of Syrian troops. On the 13th a car bomb exploded near a Hezbollah demonstration, killing several people. A general ceasefire on the 25th lasted barely hours. Eventually, on 30 January the leaders of Amal and Hezbollah were persuaded to sign a peace agreement in Damascus, brokered by Syrian and Iranian officials, in which Hezbollah recognised Amal's primacy within Lebanon, but was itself allowed to maintain bases on its territory. Hezbollah also agreed not to attack UNIFIL or other international bodies in Lebanon.

LEBANESE ARMY VERSUS THE LEBANESE FORCES MILITIA

In February 1989 the Lebanese Forces militia clashed with elements of the Lebanese army loyal to General Aoun, the Falangists being generally opposed to his seeming willingness to fall in with Syrian policy. The trouble began on the 9th with a scuffle over queue jumping on the ski slopes at Faraya (near Beirut) between groups of Lebanese Forces members and Lebanese army officers, both of whom called for armed assistance. The following day this friction developed into armed clashes in the Beirut area, which simmered on.

On the 14th the Lebanese army, with the support of the 6th (Muslim) brigade, launched an offensive designed to sever supply lines between Beirut and Junieh. This continued until the 17th when, having lost more than 80 of his men, Geaga began to withdraw his militia units from East Beirut. US helicopters had air-lifted US diplomatic staff to safety when the fighting encompassed the diplomatic quarter.

At a press conference General Aoun criticised the Lebanese Forces for levying illegal taxes, and justified his offensive against the Lebanese Forces militia by alleging that they had been planning a military coup against him and had sent assassins to kill him. Geaga tried to gloss over the poor showing put up by his Lebanese Forces units and militias, blaming low-level personnel for the initial provocative incidents. Geaga offered to stop levying taxes if Aoun would guarantee to spend more money on security and social welfare in East Beirut. Both leaders declared that their intention was to drive Syrian and other foreign armed groups from the country. On the 20th Geaga's motorcade was ambushed – he escaped harm but one bodyguard was killed. No one claimed responsibility. On the 22nd he agreed to reduce the strength of the Lebanese Forces militia in East Beirut.

On the 23rd, Lebanese Forces militia units began to withdraw from their customs posts on the northern edge of East Beirut, including Dock 5 in the port area, which had been under its control since 1976. The local press estimated that the Lebanese Forces' tax revenue losses would be in region of $1 million a month. On the 27th the 'port

crossing' on the Green Line was reopened for the first time since 1984.

Arab League talks on the Lebanese situation, which had begun in Tunis in January, moved to Kuwait on 20 February, and were attended by representatives of Hoss and Aoun.

CHRISTIAN–MUSLIM CONFRONTATION

In March 1989 a Christian–Muslim confrontation developed in Beirut. It began on the 7th, when General Aoun announced his intention to impose a naval and air blockade against the 'illegal' ports south of Beirut, which was seen as an attempt to extend his authority southwards into Muslim territory controlled by Prime Minister Hoss. Previously Walid Jumblatt had voiced mistrust over the terms that ended the February inter-Christian fighting, alleging they were pragmatic and accusing Aoun and Geaga of forming a new anti-Muslim alliance.

On the 8th, Lebanese naval craft intercepted a cargo ship heading for the tiny Druse-held port of Joye, south of Beirut, which provoked Druse artillery units to shell Christian positions in the East Beirut port area and Junieh, which in turn prompted renewed fighting on the disputed Souk al-Gharb ridge, south-east of the capital. Aoun suspended all flights by Middle Eastern airlines, which resulted in the airport closing again. On the 14th there was an artillery duel across the Green Line, said to be the worst for some two years, in which over 40 people were killed and about 140 injured (Lebanese police estimates). On the 17th a car bomb exploded near Aoun's Defence HQ complex in Yarzeh, near Baabda, killing one person and injuring many.

At another press conference Aoun had announced that his cabinet had decided to take all measures to bring about an immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops, and that his 'war of liberation' had just begun. A very brief truce came into effect on the 29th, brokered by the Arab League's six-man committee on Lebanon. The following day Muslim shells struck a fuel depot in East Beirut, the enormous clouds of smoke and dust forcing the temporary evacuation of over 30 000 people.

Throughout April Aoun pursued his self-declared 'war of liberation' against the Syrian forces, and although he must have been aware that he had little chance of driving out Syrian troops by military means, he believed that an escalation of hostilities would eventually attract international attention and produce a diplomatic solution favourable to himself. Intermittent heavy shelling necessitated the large-scale evacuation of people living on either side of the Green Line, and Lebanese police estimated that during April nearly 300 people had been killed (including the Spanish ambassador) and over 1000 injured. In mid-April a number of Christian deputies in East Beirut called for an immediate ceasefire and appealed for intervention by the United Nations, the European Union and the Arab League. They were supported by the Maronite patriarch, which slightly dented Aoun's claim that he had a popular mandate to fight against the Syrians.

The French government, having decided to support Aoun in his struggle against Selim Hoss, sent a diplomatic representative to Beirut. The representative accused the Syrians of shelling the French embassy and announced that two French ships were arriving with fuel and medicines for East Beirut. The Druse warned they would shell the French ships if they docked at any Christian-controlled port, causing the French representative to explain hastily that the relief aid was meant to be distributed in West Beirut too. It was not a successful mission. The French made another attempt the following month, and also moved an aircraft carrier to the eastern Mediterranean. French diplomats visited both Aoun and Hoss, as well as Arab capitals, and eventually produced a three-point plan. However this too had little effect.

ARAB LEAGUE PEACE PLAN

On 26 April 1989 the delegates at an emergency meeting of the Arab League in Tunis approved a peace plan for Lebanon. The plan called for a ceasefire (beginning on the 28th), deployment of an Arab League ceasefire observer force, the lifting of blockades and the election of a Lebanese

president. It also contained proposals for political reform. Selim Hoss immediately accepted the Arab League's plan, but Aoun said he only would cooperate with it at the military level. The ceasefire came into effect on schedule but only lasted until 1 May, when artillery activity was resumed across the Green Line, along which crossing points due to be reopened were abandoned.

An Arab League delegation arrived in Beirut on 3 May, and after separate interviews with Aoun and Hoss they announced that both leaders agreed to reopen the Green Line for a provisional three month period. Another ceasefire across Lebanon came into effect on the 11th, but was almost instantly broken when Muslim guns shelled Junieh. A car-bomb explosion on the 16th killed the (Sunni) grand mufti of Lebanon, Sheikh Hassan Khalid, who had been a firm supporter of the Arab League's plan. A few days later in Casablanca (Morocco), an Arab League emergency meeting on Lebanon collapsed as the participants could not decide who should represent Lebanon – Hoss or Aoun.

INTERNATIONAL HOSTAGE CRISIS

During July and August 1989 the Hezbollah-related kidnapping of Westerners dominated the scene in Lebanon and the Middle East, overshadowing Lebanese domestic events, which remained stalemated in Christian–Muslim conflict. On 28 July a helicopter raid was launched by Israel to kidnap Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid, a Hezbollah leader, from the village of Dipchit in Lebanon. Obeid was accused by Israel of organising attacks against Israelis and kidnapping the American Colonel Higgins. Hezbollah, using the code name 'Organisation for the Oppressed of the Earth', demanded Obeid's immediate release, otherwise Higgins would be killed. The Israelis prevaricated, and on 31 July, when the deadline expired, a video tape of Higgins' execution by hanging was handed to a Beirut newspaper.

FIGHTING AT SOUK AL-GHARB

Aoun's 'war of liberation' against Muslim militias continued during the first part of August, fuelled by Iraqi arms. The Christian-held Souk al-Gharb ridge, to the south-east of Beirut, overlooked both the presidential palace in Baabda and the adjacent Yarzeh Defence Ministry complex, both of which were being fortified by Aoun, who himself worked from a bunker in the palace. On 10 August Druse artillery began to shell the ridge and its surrounds. The shelling lasted three days and was said to be the heaviest so far in this region – over 100 people were killed. It ended on the 13th with a Syrian–Druse assault: they managed to capture two main positions but were then driven back again by the Christian defenders. Aoun crowed that this was a 'sterling victory', and again called for the Syrian troops to be withdrawn from Lebanon.

THE UNITED FRONT

On 15 August 1989 the leaders of several Lebanese Muslim and Palestinian militias met in Damascus, where they announced the formation of an anti-Aoun United Front (several of these leaders had met the previous month, allegedly to plan the disastrous Souk al-Gharb attack). The same day the UN Security Council unanimously approved a resolution calling for a halt to the shelling in Beirut, and giving support to the Arab League peace committee. On the 18th Aoun accepted the UN's ceasefire call, but the Syrians were non-committal and shelling across the Green Line was resumed. The Syrians made one more attempt – using tanks and guns – to penetrate Christian lines in Madfoun, north of Beirut, but failed and fell back again.

THE TAIF PLAN

The Lebanese National Assembly met in Taif, Saudi Arabia, on 30 September 1989 to discuss a peace plan produced by the Arab League on the 16th. The previous day

a Muslim deputy had been assassinated, which was seen as an attempt to subvert the Taif meeting. Of the 99 deputies elected in 1972, only about 70 were still alive, of whom 62 attended the Taif session: 31 Christians and 31 Muslims. The plan called for an immediate ceasefire, to be supervised by a security committee, and included suggestions for political reform of the Lebanese constitution, as well as an increase in the number of deputies from 99 to 128 in order to even out the Christian–Muslim imbalance. It was accepted by Selim Hoss, but not by Aoun because it contained no mention of Syrian troops being withdrawn from Lebanon. Furthermore it was welcomed by the Syrian government and the United Front militias, and supported by the United States and the USSR. Later Aoun accepted the plan, due, he said, to international pressure. It also was revealed that he had tried to prevent Christian deputies from attending the Taif session, which indicated a falling off of his Christian support.

A ceasefire came into effect in Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon on the 23rd, the airport reopened the following day and the situation remained generally quiet for a while, but there were rumblings. Both Berri and Jumblatt warned that unless there were substantial political reforms the ceasefire would not last. Aoun was hanging back, saying there could be no full acceptance of the Taif plan until a Syrian withdrawal timetable was settled.

THE TAIF ACCORDS

The Taif talks were succeeded by another Lebanese National Assembly session in Taif on 22 October 1989. It was attended by the same 62 deputies, who voted to accept the amended Taif Accords for national reconciliation. These provided for a redistribution of political power between Christians and Muslims, the gradual elimination of confessionalism and the redeployment of Syrian troops outside Beirut. The number of deputies was to be increased to 108.

All armed militias were to be disarmed and disbanded within six months, and for a two-year period Syria would

be responsible for the security of the Lebanese National Accord government; thereafter all Syrian armed forces would move from Beirut into the eastern Bekaa region, and to positions along the Beirut–Damascus highway. The deputies were called upon to meet again on 7 November to ratify the Taif Accords and to elect a new president.

The Taif Accords were opposed by Aoun, who alleged they were a betrayal of Lebanese sovereignty. He complained that, before they left for Taif, the Christian deputies had assured him that concessions on political reforms would only be granted in return for a complete Syrian withdrawal. Aoun still had considerable support in East Beirut, and on 24 October several hundred of his followers marched to the Baabda Palace to demonstrate in his favour. However Aoun was sidelined by George Saadeh (leader of the Falange Party and a prominent player in the Taif negotiations), supported by Samir Geaga (leader of the Lebanese Forces militia), Dany Chamoun (leader of the National Liberal Party) and the Maronite patriarch. The leaders of the United Front anti-Aoun militias, including Berri and Jumblatt, also expressed disappointment with the accords, claiming that Lebanese political reform had been gained at the expense of the Shias, now acknowledged to be largest sect in Lebanon. Both Hezbollah and the Iranian government criticised the accords.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONVENED

Speaker Hussein al-Husseini summoned the Lebanese deputies to convene on 4 November 1989 to elect a new president, in accordance with the Taif Accords. They were to meet at a Syrian-guarded air base in the northern town of Klaiat. Several deputies were living in Paris, being in fear of their lives in Lebanon. Aoun remained uncompromising and called on all Christian deputies to consult him before going to Klaiat. The Paris-based deputies responded by urging Aoun to accept the Taif Accords.

Early in the morning of the 4th news reached Aoun that the Muslim deputies had left West Beirut for Klaiat, whereupon he called a press conference at his bunker in the

Baabda presidential palace and announced the dissolution of the Lebanese Assembly, although little notice was taken of this move. During the afternoon of the 5th the Paris-based deputies arrived in Klaiat and the National Assembly went into session.

The Deputies elected Rene Mouawad as president of Lebanon. Mouawad, a Maronite lawyer, had been a deputy since 1972 and had held various cabinet posts over the years. Selim Hoss and his Muslim cabinet formally resigned to allow the new president to appoint his own prime minister. Hussein al-Husseini was reelected Speaker. Support was pledged to President Mouawad by the Falangist Party, but Samir Geaga of the Lebanese Forces militia refrained from committing himself. Support was also pledged by the Israeli-backed SLA, stationed in the security zone. President Mouawad quickly gained widespread international recognition, a main exception being Iran.

Aoun claimed these decisions were null and void as he had dissolved the National Assembly, and a group of his supporters stormed the residence of the Maronite patriarch in Bhirka, forcing him to denounce the presidential election. On the 13th President Mouawad called on Selim Hoss to form a 'Government of National Reconciliation'. Berri, Jumblatt and Geaga refused invitations to serve under Prime Minister Hoss, presumably because at that stage they did not want to oppose Aoun openly.

PRESIDENT HRAWI

On 22 November 1989 a massive remote-controlled bomb exploded beside the motorcade of President Mouawad as it moved through West Beirut on an Independence Day parade, killing the president, ten of his bodyguards and several others. Prime Minister Hoss and Speaker Hussein, who were travelling together in another vehicle, were unhurt. No one claimed responsibility, but the finger of suspicion pointed at Aoun. Deputies of the National Assembly met in session on the 24th in Chtaura, under tight Syrian security precautions. The 52 deputies present elected Elias Hrawi as president of Lebanon (he had unsuccessfully

challenged Mouawad in the previous election). Hrawi, a businessman from Zahle, had been active in the Taif negotiations and had good relations with both the Maronite leadership and the Syrians. Hrawi confirmed Selim Hoss as his prime minister. Hoss rearranged the ministerial team and gained a vote of confidence on the 26th. At the same time the deputies extended their own term of office to the end of 1994.

AOUN EMBATTLED

The Hoss cabinet, at a meeting on the 26th that was also attended by President Hrawi, dismissed General Michel Aoun from his post as commander of the Lebanese army and appointed General Emile Lahud in his place. Aoun had already been dismissed by Hoss in November 1988, but this heavy formality was thought necessary to emphasise the legality of his dismissal as he still retained the loyalty of a substantial number in the army, both Christian and Muslim. Aoun remained defiant and refused to stand down, causing President Hrawi to declare that he would resort to military force to remove him from his 'bunker' in the presidential palace. Syrian troops began to deploy for this purpose, and in anticipation of an attack several thousand of Aoun's supporters massed outside the presidential palace, forming a 'human shield'. They were joined by a number of Christian deputies from East Beirut. President Hrawi was persuaded to think again and the Syrian troops stood down. During December President Hwari used other methods to isolate Aoun in Baabda, including ordering banks to stop cash transfers to Aoun-controlled territory, and on the 14th the Defence Ministry stopped the wages of Aoun's soldiers.

11 The Closing Battles: 1990–91

On 30 January 1990 General Michel Aoun – self-styled 'interim prime minister of the Christian government', ensconded in the presidential palace in Baabda in the Christian enclave and controlling about 300 square miles, including most of East Beirut and districts to its east and north – ordered the Lebanese Forces militia, commanded by Samir Geaga, with whom Aoun was in conflict, to disarm, declaring that no one was permitted to carry arms except the Lebanese army, of which a large proportion, mainly Christian, expressed loyalty to him. Personnel at the Lebanese Defense HQ in Yarzeh (adjacent to Baabda) and many other elements of the Lebanese defence forces still regarded him as their legitimate commander.

The fragile alliance between Aoun and Geaga had crumbled in February 1989, and in the fighting the Lebanese Forces, the military arm of the Falangist Lebanese Front, had been forced to relinquish its lucrative but illegal control of some ports. The fact that Geaga had given tacit approval to the Taif Accords but Aoun had not further exacerbated their enmity, and clashes between the Lebanese Forces militia and Aoun's Lebanese army units had become commonplace. It was estimated that Aoun had about 15 000 soldiers, some 350 tanks and armoured vehicles and 200 guns and mortars at his disposal, while the Lebanese Forces militia could only muster some 10 000 militiamen, with 150 tanks and armoured vehicles and fewer than 100 guns and mortars (*The Economist*).

On 13 January 1990 the Druse Progressive Socialist Party had held its annual congress, at which Walid Jumblatt had been reelected leader and it had been decided to replace its central committee by an 'Assembly of Guides', headed by Sharif Fayed, the secretary general. Later in the year (June), to emphasise his independent stance, Jumblatt announced he had established formal relations with China.

THE AOUN OFFENSIVE

On 31 January 1990 Aoun launched a tank-led assault on Lebanese Forces positions, presumably assuming he had sufficient strength and firepower to eliminate them. This was a miscalculation. The Lebanese Forces militia held off the initial attacks and then fought back with well-regulated counterblows, overrunning many of Aoun's positions. The fighting, Christian against Christian, was prolonged and bitter, animosity between the two factions having built up during the previous months. The estimated casualty count of 52 dead and over 190 wounded on this single day indicated the ferocity of the conflict, while the accompanying devastation appalled even hardened observers. The following day (1 February) General Aoun agreed to a ceasefire (both sides needed a breathing space and time to rescue their wounded), but on the 3rd Aoun's artillery again began to pound the Lebanese-Forces-held Karantina and Ashrafiyeh districts in East Beirut.

On the 4th Aoun's troops advanced northwards out of East Beirut towards the Lebanese Forces' base in Dabayeh (ten miles from the centre of Beirut), where a two-day battle ensued in which Aoun's Lebanese army units captured several Lebanese Forces barracks and installations, remaining in occupation of them. The importance of Dabayeh was that it straddled the Lebanese Forces' supply lines. This was one up to Aoun. Encouraged, he launched a tank-led attack against the Ain Rumaniyeh district (adjacent to Ashrafiyeh). After the capture of Dabayeh, Aoun's army units remained stationary for a few days: they needed a rest.

In West Beirut President Hrawi called upon world leaders for support, which fell on deaf ears, and for all Lebanese army soldiers to rally to General Emile Lahud, his own appointed commander, who now virtually controlled much of the Muslim element of the former Lebanese army. On the 10th Aoun's forces attacked Lebanese Forces bases near Junieh and in the Kesrouan mountain area, with some success, but withdrew again to avoid being overextended.

On 15 February Aoun's troops launched attacks on the Ain Rumaniyeh and Furn al-Shebak districts of Beirut. The artillery barrages were so heavy that a press headline in

al-Nahar later described the scene as looking like 'a cemetery hit by an earthquake'. It was estimated that over 60 people were killed in this bout of fighting, bringing the total number of dead since 31 January to nearly 600, with up to 2000 wounded. The Lebanese Forces militia triumphed on 17 February, when it overran Adma, an isolated Lebanese army pocket just north of Junieh. The Maronite patriarch arranged a ceasefire (the local press claimed this was 'the twelfth since 31 January'), which enabled the garrison to be evacuated.

AN AOUN–GEAGA PACT

A Maronite committee negotiated a six-point pact between General Aoun and Samir Geaga on 19 February 1990, which basically endorsed Aoun's supremacy within the Christian enclave while at the same time guaranteeing the continued existence of the Lebanese Forces militia. The two leaders drew opposing conclusions from this adjudication, but the fragile ceasefire continued until the end of the month, for the pragmatic reason that both needed time to consolidate their defences.

On 1 March Aoun's troops again attacked Ashrafiyeh, as well as the Nabaa district, claiming to capture several streets, and also set part of the Dori commercial area on fire, which abruptly terminated the ceasefire. The toll for the day's fighting was estimated at 75 dead and over 150 wounded. The vicious intensity of this Christian against Christian fighting, and the casualty rate, startled the Christian community, and also the Maronite patriarch, who threatened to excommunicate all those who refused to stop fighting and give up their arms. Another ceasefire came into effect on the 2nd. The Vatican tried to persuade General Aoun to negotiate and come to some agreement with President Hrawi, but Hrawi stated that talks were out of the question until Aoun evacuated the Baabda Palace and the Yarzeh defence complex. The truce ended with an outbreak of rocket firing on the 9th, followed by heavy shelling on the 13th. Activity on both sides was vigorous and ammunition seemed to be plentiful.

Another short but vicious spate of fighting broke out on 25 March in the Ashrafiyeh, Sin al-Saloum and Dori districts. Although there was some street fighting, the main action consisted of artillery and mortar barrages and little ground changed hands. The following day the Maronite patriarch called Lebanese Christian leaders to his palace in Bhirka, the object being to persuade President Hrawi to intervene in the deadly Christian conflict. Aoun rejected the invitation and briefly shelled the palace just before the meeting began. Once again the patriarch threatened to excommunicate those responsible.

As a conciliatory gesture to Christians who supported Elias Hrawi, on the 30th General Lahud announced that he had opened the 'port road' between West and East Beirut. The gesture was ineffective as General Aoun unleashed artillery barrages on those parts of East Beirut that were occupied by the Lebanese Forces militia, and also on a group of Lebanese Forces-held villages north-east of the city. For some weeks thereafter there was a general stalemate, punctuated by spasmodic shelling and mortar fire by both Christian factions.

PRESIDENT HRAWI

Although there had been protracted Amal–Hezbollah fighting in southern Beirut and the Bekaa Valley in December, causing over 100 deaths, the conflict more or less ceased during the first three months of 1990. There were two reasons for this, the first being the Hoss cabinet's acceptance of Hrawi and Assad's West Beirut security plan, which basically provided for the gradual replacement of Syrian troops by Lebanese soldiers and police. The other reason was that the Hezbollah leaders had met in Tehran in January and elected a completely new leadership, which excluded former 'Syrian sympathisers'. Hezbollah's new patron was Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, the hard-line former defence minister, who was involved in international hostage taking in Lebanon and was waiting to see how events developed.

The lull was broken in southern Beirut on 13 March, when an Amal–Hezbollah incident flared up. At least ten

people were killed and several injured before Syrian troops stepped in to stop it. This was followed by another incident on the 27th at an Amal checkpoint, when a vehicle carrying Sheikh Sobhi Tufeili, a Hezbollah leader, was fired upon. Syrian troop intervention was required to calm the situation. A prominent Amal official was assassinated in southern Beirut on 16 April, for which Hezbollah was blamed. Street fighting erupted and rumbled on until the 23rd, when a ceasefire was declared by Nabih Berri, but other incidents occurred and Syrian troops mounted a crackdown on 31 May.

In East Beirut there was little street fighting during April and May, although artillery and mortar shelling were common occurrences. The Lebanese Forces militia retained control of the Junieh and Jubail areas north of Beirut, and the Ashrafiyeh and Karantina districts in Beirut, while Aoun continued to hold the areas around Baabda, Ras al-Metn and the southern approaches to East Beirut.

In June, George Saadeh, leader of the Falangist Party, joined the Hoss cabinet (he had resigned in January 1990), thereby accepting the Taif Accords. President Hrawi made a tour of Arab capitals touting for support, and an Arab League 'troika' (Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria) announced the establishment of an International Fund for Assisting Lebanon, its aim being to raise $1 billion for 'reconstruction and restoring the economic structures' of Lebanon. Both France and the Vatican sent out peace feelers.

NEW PEACE PLAN

On 11 July President Hrawi produced a new peace initiative in an effort to persuade General Aoun to accept the Taif Accords. He called it the 'Reunification of Administrative Beirut', meaning the central part of the city without the suburbs, from where all armed militias would be withdrawn, and the integration of Aoun's troops into the Lebanese army under the command of General Antoine Lahud. 'Interim prime minister' Aoun rejected this plan, which caused Hrawi to tighten his embargo against Aoun's enclave on the 25th by stopping all fuel supplies.

In southern Lebanon in July there were bouts of Amal–Hezbollah fighting, caused by the Iranian government's attempt to undermine the Taif Accords. On the 16th Hezbollah captured Jarju, a village in the Iklim al-Tuffah hills. The following day a large pro-Arafat detachment, said to be some 600 strong, moved into the area to act as a buffer force between Amal and Hezbollah militias, but soon appeared to be siding with Amal, this uncertain situation continuing for a few days. Alarmed, Israel sent troops into the security zone. Most unusually, Israel allowed isolated Hezbollah militia elements to carry in supplies across Israeli-held territory, a situation that was afterwards criticised in Israel. That month Israel made several air strikes on Palestinian and Hezbollah camps. The combined casualties for the fighting in the Iklim al-Tuffah area and the air strikes were estimated as 180 killed and over 500 wounded.

IRAQ ATTACKS KUWAIT: AUGUST 1990

On 2 August 1990 Iraq marched into Kuwait and a whole new chapter began in the Middle East. To defend its Middle East oil supplies the United States began to cobble together a military alliance against Saddam Hussin of Iraq. A great deal of bribery, coercion and intimidation was used by US Secretary of State James Baker to build up an Allied force in Saudi Arabia to oust the Iraqis from Kuwait. Syria was persuaded to join the coalition and was rewarded for this by a promise that its name would be removed from the US 'List of States supporting International Terrorism', which involved diplomatic, financial, trade and other boycotts. Accordingly Syria's activities in Lebanon, which previously had been heavily and roundly criticised by the United States, were now ignored. Also, as the USSR was on the point of collapse and the previous month (July 1990) the Cold War had been officially ended by the London Declaration, Syria had lost a powerful ally and had to walk more carefully on the international scene.

Arafat voiced his support of Saddam Hussein, giving the United States an excuse to discriminate against the PLO.

Jordan did not join the Allied coalition, which displeased the United States; and while Israel wanted to join in the fight the United States did not want this to happen, and with difficulty, especially when Iraqi Scud missiles fell on Israel, it persuaded Israel to stay clear. During the six-month build-up of the Allied coalition force in Saudi Arabia other events in the Middle East took second place, especially in news coverage. Meanwhile Iraq was supplying arms to Aoun and the Lebanese Forces.

LEBANON'S SECOND REPUBLIC

President Elias Hrawi signed an amendment to the Taif Accords that increased the National Assembly from 99 to 108 seats, reduced the powers of the president and increased those of the prime minister. The amendment was approved by 51 deputies in West Beirut on 21 August 1990, thus formally bringing into existence Lebanon's 'Second Republic', a virtual protectorate of Syria.

DEATH RIVER MASSACRE

President Hrawi further tightened the economic restrictions on Aoun's enclave, estimated to contain about 300 000 Christians, amongst whom Aoun had considerable support. Aoun remained defiant, and a candlelit mass demonstration by his supporters against the blockade took place on the evening of 28 September 1990 near the Nahr al-Mawt (Death River), during the course of which unidentified gunmen fired into the crowds, killing 25 and injuring over 80. These killings became known as the 'Death River Massacre'. Aoun and others blamed the Lebanese Forces, but Geaga claimed that the incident had been deliberately organised by Aoun's intelligence branch to obtain international sympathy: however many doubted this. In any case international attention was on the Kuwaiti problem and few thoughts were being spared for the unfortunate Lebanese and their civil war, a point well noted by the Syrian government, now a Western ally.

Tension arose over President Hrawi's economic blockade against Aoun, as support for it was waning in Muslim West Beirut and Walid Jumblatt was speaking out openly against it. A crisis point was approaching for Hrawi so he decided to act before it was too late and on 10 October he formally asked Syria to come to the aid of his section of the Lebanese army. The following day thousands of Syrian troops took up forward positions around the perimeter of Aoun's territory, now reduced, according to local newspapers, to an enclave of approximately 100 square kilometres. Aoun admitted that he was surrounded, but declared he was ready to fight his 'final battle'. On the 12th he addressed a mass gathering of his supporters in Baabda, during which he narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. He was now also deprived of Iraqi munitions due to the Allied blockade.

AOUN'S FINAL BATTLE

Although the armed forces ranged against General Aoun included units of General Antoine Lahud's section of the Lebanese army, the overwhelming majority consisted of Syrian troops. Elements of three Christian militias were also allowed to become involved: the Lebanese Forces militia, led by Samir Geaga; the Falangist militia, led by Elie Hobeika; and the smaller Syrian National Socialist Party militia.

The battle commenced early in the morning of 13 October 1990, when a Syrian aerial attack was made on the Baabda presidential palace and the adjacent Yarzeh military complex, followed by continuous heavy artillery barrages. Within an hour General Aoun, his family and several high-ranking supporters were seeking political asylum in the French embassy. Meanwhile Lebanese and Syrians troops, under the nominal command of General Lahud, pushed in on the Aoun enclave from all sides, meeting stiff resistance.

Later that morning, under pressure from the French ambassador, Aoun broadcast a radio message ordering his troops to obey General Lahud, but in an aside message he urged his senior officers to fight on, which many did. By the afternoon Syrian troops had gained control over the

whole of Aoun's Christian enclave and the turmoil of battle died down. There was no doubt who the military victors were – the Syrians.

The ground battle, although comparatively short, had been fierce, bitter and brutal, especially when Christian met Christian in combat, and it was alleged that atrocities and massacres had been committed by both sides. One allegation was that the Aounists had set a 'white flag trap', enabling them to shoot some 150 Syrian troops, and that in response Syrian troops had executed up to 80 captured Aounists. The atrocities seem to have been committed largely by the Lebanese Christian militias accompanying the Syrian troops. Initial reports indicated that the death toll was about 200 for the day's battle, but the estimates were constantly updated as more bodies were discovered. The final figure was in excess of 500 deaths.

Syrian troops immediately began to dismantle the Green Line and Aoun's defensive positions and barriers, and by the 15th the section that formed part of the Beirut–Damascus highway was open for traffic for the first time since 1985. The Syrians were calling the tune.

The French formally granted General Aoun political asylum, but the French embassy in Beirut remained surrounded by Lebanese Forces militiamen determined to prevent him from escaping, and demanding that he stand trial for mutiny and the misuse of government funds. President Mitterrand said that Aoun could remain in the French embassy indefinitely.

President Hrawi announced that he intended to implement the greater Beirut security plan and start disarming the militias. For this purpose Greater Beirut was defined as consisting of the city itself and a 20-mile-wide belt around the city, stretching from the Kalb River in the north to the Damour River in the south.

On 21 October 1990 two hooded gunmen in battle fatigues entered an East Beirut residence, where they shot and killed Dany Chamoun, leader of the National Liberal Party, as well as his wife and their two small sons (a baby daughter survived). Dany Chamoun was one of the last surviving factional Lebanese chieftains and was deeply involved in traditional feuds. No one claimed responsibility,

but fingers pointed to the Falangists. Eventually, in May 1991 Dory Chamoun was elected leader of the National Liberal Party, in succession to his assassinated brother.

DISARMING THE MILITIAS

On 24 October 1990 President Hrawi ordered all armed militias to leave Beirut and hand over their positions to the Lebanese army. If they failed to do so by 19 November they would face forcible Syrian ejection. Slowly the PSP retired to the Chouf area, Amal and Hezbollah withdrew southwards towards the Iklim al-Tuffah area, but the Lebanese Forces militia refused to move out until all the others had left. Syrian troops moved against the latter, and by 3 December it had completed its withdrawal from the Ashrafiyeh district, its major stronghold, to the Kesrouan region, north of Beirut. The Lebanese army, under General Lahud, began to adopt positions throughout the greater Beirut belt.

ISRAELI REACTION

Israel was sorry to see General Aoun defeated, especially by Syrians, and was alarmed by the subsequent southwards movement of Amal, Hezbollah and Palestinian militias into the Iklim al-Tuffah area. Israel responded aggressively with air strikes and ground raids, as well as reinforcing its garrison in the security zone. On 27 November 1990 five Israeli soldiers were killed by Palestinian militiamen. The Lebanese and the Israeli government each stated that it was their intention to maintain military control over Jezzine, the controversial Christian town at the northern tip of the Israeli security zone.

THE UMAR KARAMI GOVERNMENT

Prime Minister Selim Hoss resigned on 20 December 1990, and the following day President Hrawi invited Education

Minister Umar Karami (brother of Rashid Karami, the oft-times former prime minister), to form a Government of National Unity. Michel Murr became defence minister and General Samir Khataib was appointed as interior minister. Both were pro-Syrian, which caused some Christian muttering as these were key ministries.

Umar Karami appointed nine ministers without portfolio – all leaders of the main parties and militias – in the hope that they would cooperate with his new government, or at least not rock the boat. He wanted them on the inside, rather than the outside. However George Saadeh, leader of the Falange Party, refused to accept the appointment, complaining of Syrian dominance and that the Karami government did not reflect the views of the Christian community. Other nominated ministers without portfolio remained passive for the time being: some later opted out, the remainder seemed indifferent.

The Karami government gained a vote of confidence in the National Assembly on 9 January 1991 by silent default, the voting being 27 in favour to three against – 27 deputies refrained from voting and others were absent. On the 10th Walid Jumblatt, a minister without portfolio, withdrew from the government; Samir Geaga continued to campaign against the government, and on the 28th called for its dissolution.

Meanwhile Lebanese army troops continued to search for concealed weapons and ammunition in Beirut. They also tore down militia posters and flags, and obliterated slogans daubed on walls and buildings.

SOUTH LEBANON

On 14 January 1991 Arafat called on all Palestinians in Lebanon to fight on the side of Iraq in the Gulf War. (It was thought there were about 7000 armed Palestinians in Lebanon, not all of whom were pro-Arafat.) The Allied air offensive against Iraqi-occupied Kuwait began two days later, which encouraged Syria to take action against pro-Arafat factions in Lebanon. This situation suited Israel, which officially stated that it had no objection to the Lebanese

army deploying in southern Lebanon, provided it took action against terrorist organisations, meaning the PLO and Hezbollah. On the 29th Hezbollah fired dozens of Katyusha rockets into the Israeli security zone, and in the evening Israeli gunboats shelled PLO positions near the Rashidiyah camp and Hezbollah positions on the Iklim al-Tuffah ridge.

A Lebanese army force of about 1500 men began to move southwards on 6 February to the Iklim al-Tuffah area, and also into positions around Zahrani and Nabatiyeh. In accordance with agreements, both Hezbollah and the Amal militia evacuated these areas. Israel again emphasised that the Lebanese army must prevent militia attacks against them in the security zone and Israel proper. The Lebanese army carried out its orders to ban militia displays, demonstrations and posters. In fact it seemed that Israel and Syria, officially at war with each other, were unofficially and effectively cooperating with each other over southern Lebanon. The first clash between the Lebanese army and the Israeli-supported SLA occurred on 19 March on the border of the security zone, when an SLA patrol intercepted a Lebanese army unit that was removing mines in a disputed area.

DISARMING THE MILITIAS

During March a Lebanese ministerial committee, headed by the defence minister, announced that the 'ten nominated' (the number seemed to fluctuate) armed militias must dissolve by 20 April 1991 and hand over their weapons at designated locations, and that within two months the draft of a nationwide security plan would be produced. Defence Minister Murr narrowly escaped assassination in East Beirut when a roadside bomb was detonated as his motorcade passed by, killing eight people and injuring over 20.

The Lebanese authorities continued to take over the 'illegal' ports, but it was proving to be a slow business. The main port in Beirut reopened on 15 March, having been shut for some 14 months, but it was not until 15 May that full control was gained over the remaining half-dozen smaller ones in greater Beirut and the Lebanese government could at last say that it was once more in control of its seaborne trade.

On 20 March Samir Geaga, leader of the Lebanese Forces militia, resigned from his nominal post as minister without portfolio in the Government of National Unity, which he had boycotted since its formation in December. On the 28th the cabinet approved a timetable, drafted by the defence minister, for disarming the militias, with a new deadline of 30 April. The government assumed for the purpose of this plan that all armed militias had disbanded on the 20th as instructed (a convenient illusion), and all that remained was for them to turn in their arms and ammunition.

The next stage would be for the Lebanese army to be deployed outside greater Beirut and to extend its authority to the whole of Lebanon by 20 September. The problem then arose of what to do with the disbanded militiamen, so a government rehabilitation and training programme was set up. It was estimated that there might be up to 50 000 ex-militiamen in Lebanon. The Lebanese army, now about 20 000 strong, was willing to accept up to 18 000, but arguments arose over what proportions to accept from the major militias. Militia ranks would have to be forfeited due to lack of formal military training, which caused discontent. It was subsequently announced that the strength of other government security forces, meaning the gendarmerie and the police, would be increased to accommodate some '16 000 unemployed militiamen'.

The Lebanese Forces militia was slow to disarm, refusing to do so while PLO units retained their weaponry. Syrian pressure persuaded them to surrender some arms, although it was suspected that many were simply hidden away. The PLO and Hezbollah remained the main obstacles to disarmament in southern Lebanon, the PLO still insisting that it was not a militia, but an army fighting Israel. Hezbollah remained silent and inactive in this respect, and no special pressure was put on it by the Syrians. The Gulf War over, Syria was having a hard time holding the United States to its promises. The Lebanese foreign minister (Faris Buwayz) travelled to Cairo to meet PLO officials to discuss disarmament, but had little success. Both the PLO and Hezbollah retained their arms.

TREATY OF BROTHERHOOD WITH SYRIA

In Damascus on 22 May 1991, President Elias Hrawi of Lebanon and President Assad of Syria jointly signed the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination between their two countries, which was described in the Damascus media as a 'marriage of convenience'. The Treaty was also criticised by Israel – which said it amounted to the annexation of Lebanon by Syria, and indeed it virtually was – and by the Tehran government. Just previously the Lebanese National Assembly had approved the required amendments to the Taif Accords of 1989, and authorised that the number of deputies be increased from 99 to 108.

On 7 June the Lebanese cabinet announced the nomination of 40 new deputies to fill the 31 vacant seats, nine of which were new ones so that Muslims would have the same representation as Christians. The National Assembly met to accept the nominees. Three of the new seats were given to Shias (now unofficially accepted as forming 53 per cent of the population), and two each to Sunnis, Druse and Alawites. One established deputy died while this process was being conducted, but his seat was left vacant. The new deputies included Prime Minister Umar Karami, Nabih Berri, Walid Jumblatt and other ministers.

A few days after the signing of the Treaty of Brotherhood, the Iranian speaker, Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, visited Damascus to meet President Assad and to confer with Hezbollah leaders operating in Lebanon, who were called in to be lectured by him. Rafsanjani wanted to phase out the international hostage-taking saga, and for Hezbollah to direct its efforts against Israel. Hezbollah's secretary general, Sheikh Sobhi Tufeili, advocate and chief organiser of international hostage taking, was pushed aside and replaced by Sheikh Abbas Moussawi. Rafsanjani wanted to improve Iran's relations with Western countries, mainly for economic reasons.

PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE

Meanwhile Israel stepped up its aggressive activities in the security zone and southern Lebanon, making a number of air strikes in June, particularly against PLO militia positions and training camps. On 1 July 1991 Lebanese army units crossed the Awali River and moved southwards towards the port of Sidon, which was under control of the Nasserite Popular Organisation. The latter permitted the Lebanese troops to enter the city without resistance, but when they moved eastwards towards the Palestinian camps they encountered opposition from Palestinian militias.

Fighting between Lebanese army troops and pro-Arafat militias began on the 2nd, when a hard one-day battle took place. The Palestinians called for a ceasefire in the evening, and for a 'serious political dialogue'. Fighting continued the following day, the Lebanese army gaining control of most of the ground surrounding the Rashidiyah and Mieh Mieh camps. Over 60 people were killed, 150 were wounded and about 450 Palestinians were taken prisoner by the Lebanese.

On the 4th, two Lebanese ministers met PLO representatives at the Sidon home of Mustafa Saad, leader of the Nasserite Popular Organisation, and it was agreed that the Palestinians would withdraw into the two refugee camps and hand over their heavy and medium weapons to the Lebanese army. The ministers said they might be prepared to discuss Palestinians' civil rights in Lebanon, but not political ones. (Ever since the Lebanese government's abrogation in 1976 of the 1969 Cairo Agreement, which gave Palestinians the right to carry arms in Lebanon and to carry out cross-border operations into Israel, the PLO had been attempting to regain these privileges, but without success.)

PLO units began to hand over their weapons on the 8th. Although large quantities were surrendered, the Lebanese army suspected that many were being hidden in the camps and therefore imposed a complete blockade around them, insisting that it would remain in place until the army was satisfied that the Palestinians had fully complied with the demand. A partial stand-off ensued. On the 11th, Lebanese army units moved southwards into the Tyre area in order to monitor PLO units and restrict their activities.

Elsewhere in the south, Lebanese army units stopped just short of entering the town of Jezzine, which brought them face to face with the SLA. The Lebanese government stated it would seek to persuade the United States to exert pressure on Israel to comply with UN Resolution 425, which called for Israel to withdrdaw from Lebanon. The Lebanese army tended to avoided Hezbollah-held terrain and contact with its militia due to Syria's influence, as Syria and Iran still maintained close contact, despite Gulf War alignments. Hezbollah developed a more aggressive attitude towards Israel and made frequent attacks in the security zone, to which Israel responded with air strikes and artillery and mortar bombardments.

GENERAL AMNESTY

On 26 August 1991 the Lebanese National Assembly approved the 'Amnesty for War Crimes' law, governing crimes committed in the civil war of 1975–90. Excluded from amnesty were those responsible for the incident alleged to have sparked off the civil war (the assassination of Maarouf Saada in February 1975), as well as the attack by armed Falangists on the bus carrying Palestinians through the Ain Rumaniyeh suburb, and the assassination of Kamal Jumblatt in 1977, Rashid Karami in 1987, Rene Mouawad in 1989, Dany Chamoun in 1990 and several others.

General Michel Aoun and two of his colleagues – General Issam Abu Jamrah and General Asgar Maluf – were subsequently granted a special pardon by President Hrawi, it being stipulated that all three should live abroad for at least five years and would lose their immunity if they engaged in political activity during that period. The sum of about $3 billion allegedly held by Aoun in European banks would be frozen pending negotiations. While a decoy aircraft ostensibly waited for Aoun at the Beirut airport, he and his companions were smuggled in a small boat out from the small port of Dabayeh to board a French warship. This subterfuge was deemed necessary as it was feared that Aoun might be assassinated by a member of the Mouawad clan, which blamed him for the death of President

Rene Mouawad in November 1989. On the 29th Aoun and his two colleagues arrived in Paris, where they immediately give interviews to the media criticising the Lebanese government for becoming subservient to Syria; in turn the Lebanese government warned Aoun to observe the conditions of his pardon.

Nabih Berri resigned from his ministerial post on the 29th because the government was proposing to send an official delegation to attend a ceremony in Libya. Berri called this an affront to the Lebanese Shias as it would coincide with the thirteenth anniversary of the disappearance of Imam Musa Sadr on his visit to that country.

LEBANESE–SYRIAN SECURITY PACT

On 1 September 1991 in Damascus, Lebanese Defence Minister Michel Murr and the Syrian interior minister signed the Lebanese–Syrian Security Pact, which included measures for jointly combatting the drug trade in eastern Lebanon. President Hrawi, Prime Minister Umar Karami and Speaker Hussein al-Husseini visited Damascus to attend the first session of the Treaty of Brotherhood. A mutual policy was agreed, to be presented at the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference in October.

That month President Hrawi also visited France to ask President Mitterand for military aid to reconstruct the Lebanese armed forces and funds for reconstruction projects. This presidential meeting brought to an end a difficult period of tension and mistrust between the two countries.

On 2 November Prime Minister Karami announced that the United States had asked Israel to cease all military activity in southern Lebanon because it could have an adverse effect on the Middle East peace process, which was getting under way. In December President Chadli Benjedid of Algeria paid a state visit to Lebanon, the first head of state to do so for many years and a good sign of the resumption of diplomatic niceties.

INTERNATIONAL HOSTAGES

By the end of 1991 the saga of international hostage-taking by Hezbollah and affiliated groups (the victims were largely being held in southern Beirut and the Bekaa Valley) was coming to an end. In December the remains of William Higgins were found in South Beirut, and the skull and some bones of William Buckley, the US CIA station chief executed in October 1985, were handed over by Islamic Jihad.

The first Westerner had been kidnapped in February 1984 and the last in May 1989. In between more than 50 had been held for varying periods in strict secrecy (no one knows exactly how many, as not all were reported missing), of whom up to ten died in captivity and about half a dozen escaped. Hezbollah gained massive and continual international media coverage, the lifeblood of terrorism. This aspect of the war has only been lightly touched upon in this book because succeeding Lebanese governments were little influenced by it, their own domestic hostage problems being vastly more serious to them. By way of illustration, a Beirut voluntary organisation, the 'Committee to Safeguard Democracy and Liberty', estimated that at the end of 1991 over 7000 Lebanese citizens were still 'missing', that the Lebanese Forces still held about 2000 prisoners and Hezbollah about 60, and that Israel was still holding more than 300 Lebanese Shias.

THOUGHTS OF RECONSTRUCTION

By the end of 1991 the Lebanese government had accepted its new status and was looking towards the future. Steps were being taken to tackle the gigantic problem of economic revival and reconstruction: work had already started on several projects, including utilities and refineries. Revenue from the ports was now coming into the government's coffers, which gave it confidence. As President Hrawi and his government had generally supported the Allied line during the Kuwait crisis, funding from Western countries, Saudi Arabia and certain other Arab states was assured.

12 National Survival

A miracle had happened: the 16-year Lebanese Civil War had come to an end, an amnesty law had been accepted by the National Assembly and reconstruction had begun. The war had dragged on for so long, and so much venom and hatred had been generated, that many doubted whether bitter enemies could ever be persuaded to work and live together in harmony again, but almost overnight this was happening. Desire for vengeance and retribution seemed to obliterated by the craving for peace, and the urgent need to adopt the common-sense approach of accepting what was available politically became paramount in most Lebanese minds. A tremendous effort was made by many to push aside deep-felt emotions, and to face the future with hope.

The cost in human lives and suffering had been heavy. The precise figures are hard to ascertain as estimates often vary widely, sometimes coloured by a desire to depict causes in a historical prospect. One authority (Reuters) estimated that from 13 April 1975 to 31 December 1989 at least 130 000 people had died in Lebanon as a direct result of the war, and that over 200 000 had been injured, during a period when the population had risen from 2.2 million to 2.4 million. Most other sources put the number of deaths at around 150 000.

Another source (Glass, in *Daily Telegraph*, 21 June 1997) estimated that between 20 000 and 30 000 Lebanese had been kidnapped, mainly by Lebanese militias, although both Syrians and Israelis had been guilty in this respect. Estimates of the cost of devastation and damage to buildings and the civil superstructure have been continually rising, and now top the $14 billion mark.

Many had lost much during the civil war, but there were some gains, the main one being that the Republic of Lebanon and its 1943 covenant structure, with some modifications, had survived. Partition into separate Christian and Muslim entities had been narrowly avoided, as had the possibility of devolution into micro entities, which could have been

picked off one by one by predators. The National Assembly also survived with an equal number of Christian and Muslim seats, which reflected the true ratio fairly accurately.

Lebanon nominally remained an Arab state and a member of the Arab League, which latterly had done much to bring about the Taif Talks and hence the eventual cessation of hostilities. Lebanese political leaders were now talking and thinking of equality rather than dominance, seemingly content with what they had been achieved so far, at least for the moment, it being true that some were less satisfied than others.

Although the Treaty of Brotherhood had virtually turned Lebanon into a Syrian protectorate, it also had – conversely and for the very first time – officially acknowledged Lebanon as an 'independent republic' and not a breakaway *sanjak*. This Arab League solution had been brought about by Syrian guns, and a Syrian army of occupation remained in Lebanon.

Making a virtue of necessity, the United States had stood back and allowed the Syrians an almost free rein in Lebanon, reputedly as a reward for joining the Allied coalition during the Gulf War. President Assad had made the most of his opportunities and managed to disarm and disband the major Lebanese armed militias, previously thought to be an impossible task.

The divided and shattered Lebanese army had also survived, and it was revived, revitalised and reorganised on a 50–50 Christian–Muslim basis. It soon proved itself in the field against Palestinian and Hezbollah militias, and against Israeli infringements. Ministerial government too had survived: Lebanese ministers were regaining national authority, the civil administration was beginning to function again, trade was improving, legitimate taxes were beginning to reach the national treasury, and Syrian troops were destroying the hundreds of hectares of hashish crops that covered much of the Bekaa Valley and other fertile land, previously a major source of income for the various armed groups.

Money and promises of loans for reconstruction were pouring in, much of it from wealthy Arab Gulf states which appreciated the fact that Lebanon was retaining its Arab character. Wherever one looked in devastated, battle-scared

Beirut, one could see bulldozers and construction cranes at work. Although much remained to be done an optimistic start was being made and the mood of the people had changed from hopeless despair to hopeful expectation. Lebanese refugees, both Christian and Muslim, were returning, over 250 000 at the latest estimate, with their skills, labour and money.

It was also true that there was much unfinished business, such as ending Hezbollah's international hostage-taking campaign and accounting for Lebanese missing persons. In addition part of the country was still occupied by three hostile forces: Israeli, Iranian and Palestinian.

During the years of turmoil observers had frequently remarked that they could not understand the complexities of the civil war – who was fighting whom and why, who wanted what, and indeed who got what. Their confusion was understandable as the Lebanese themselves had at times been bewildered by the abruptly changing allegiances of their warlords.

The Maronites, who claimed to be the largest Christian sect and the largest community in Lebanon, had wanted Lebanon to retain its unity as a republic, as well as their political dominance in line with the unwritten conditions of the 1943 covenant: a 6:5 Christian–Muslim ratio, based on the 1932 census. However this ratio had become progressively more inappropriate because of the higher Muslim birth rate.

Maronite unity had been fragile as half a dozen powerful feudal families, including the Chamouns, Gemayels and Franjiehs, had jostled uneasily together and taken it in turns to hold the powerful presidency. Furthermore their armed bodyguards had developed into powerful political militias. As the war progressed the various Christian militias had become autonomous as they opposed Palestinians, Lebanese Muslims, Druse and Syrians. Christian coalitions had soon fragmented as rival agendas obtruded, clashed and often predominated, causing individual militias to enter into arrangements of convenience against each other, often with former enemies.

The Maronite militias had been territorially rooted. They had fought best on their home ground, lacked serious military

mobility and often preferred to fight old enemies, rather than new ones. Tribalism and feudalism had dominated the scene. Had the Maronites been solidly united under a strong leadership the civil war would have taken a different course, perhaps that of partition. Weakened by internal intrigue and buffeted by external factors, the Christian presidency had sought to avoid being drawn into internal conflict, retaining its aloof position but not its power, and often heavily dependent on Syrian armed support.

General Aoun's last desperate bid for the survival of an independent Christian entity had been crushed by Syrian guns, not the divided Lebanese army or Lebanese militias, paving the way to the end of the civil war and the implementation of the Taif Accords. The Maronites felt that they had lost most in the civil war, which was largely true, but their survival was due to President Assad, who had wanted a united Lebanon, fearing that if it shattered factional splits might flow over into Syria, also a country of communities and factions. With the collapse of the USSR, Assad had also wanted to please the United States, being anxious to secure not only loans and credits but also a doorway into the Western world.

Lebanese Sunni Muslims, who claimed to be the second largest sect in the country, were mainly urban dwellers and were interested in the prosperity of Lebanon. Their main objection had been that the restrictions and quotas of the 1943 covenant had debarred them from the presidency and other influential posts. Apart from nominally sympathising with the Palestinian cause, the Lebanese Sunnis had largely kept to the sidelines in the internal dispute, exercising influence through the office of prime minister.

At the beginning of the civil war the Lebanese Shias (probably the largest sect in Lebanon), the traditional 'poor and depressed', had not been considered a very significant factor, but this had changed dramatically under the leadership of Nabih Berri, an astute politician. His Shia Amal militia had become one of the largest in the country, although not always the most effective. Berri had wanted to abolish the sectarian restrictions of the 1943 covenant. His policy had been 'Lebanon for the Lebanese', and he had supported the expulsion of foreign militias from the country,

his Amal militia fighting in turn against invading Palestinians, Syrians and Iranian Revolutionary Guards, sometimes in alliance with Christians.

Under the leadership of the Jumblatt feudal family, the Druse, nominally thought of as being in the Muslim camp, had remained a major catalyst throughout the civil war. Their sentiments were inherently anti-Maronite, there being continual friction between them. Druse guns had frequently pounded Christians in East Beirut, and the PSP militia had continually attacked Christian villages. Walid Jumblatt, like his father Kamal, had been a political activist rather than a military strategist: both had been ministers in various Lebanese governments. Jumblatt's political and military clout had lain with in his National Democratic Movement, an umbrella organisation encompassing a number of left-wing Muslim and non-Muslim parties, groups and militias.

Jumblatt had been opposed to the 1943 covenant and favoured a non-sectarian republic (it was suspected that he coveted the presidency), but failing that he would settle for local autonomy should partition or devolution take place. However in the end his ambitions had been thwarted by the Syrians.

The Arab–Israeli confrontation had had a significant effect on Lebanon, deepening the divisions between the Lebanese Muslims, who had generally supported the Palestinian cause, and the Christians, who had wanted to remain neutral and to be able to trade with Israel. The Palestinians had imposed themselves on Lebanon when driven from Jordan. They had first settled in the south and east, and then spread into West Beirut, the tiny Lebanese army being unable to prevent this from happening.

Yassir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, whose aim had always been an independent Palestine, had seen Lebanon, with its weak central government and weak army, as a sanctuary, training ground and springboard for raids into Israel. He had expected continual support, and that the Palestinians would be allowed to remain in Lebanon and to operate from it into Israel, in line with the terms of the Cairo Agreement. President Assad had pushed Arafat aside, supporting instead the rebel Abu Musa faction of Fatah

and the anti-Arafat Palestine National Salvation Front, which had caused internal fighting for possession of the Palestinian refugee camps and space in Lebanon. Lebanese militias had periodically fought against Palestinians, who had become isolated and practically friendless.

The person who obtained the most from the Lebanese civil war was President Assad of Syria, a skilful, shrewd and patient politician whose agenda had been to ensure that Lebanon remained intact as an 'Arab' republic. During the period 1975–90 Syria had been seen as being in the Soviet orbit and a pawn in the Cold War, so he had had to move cautiously, infiltrating his troops into Lebanon as and when the opportunity arose. He would have liked to have recovered the 'lost *sanjak*' completely, but international constraints would not permit such an annexation, so he had worked to gain the confidence of the Lebanese presidency, persuading it that he was its only reliable, effective ally, walking a political tightrope between Lebanese Muslims, Palestinians, Iranians, Arab League nations, the United States and Israel.

Syrian troops had been called into Lebanon in April 1976 by the Lebanese government, but at first they remained on the sidelines. They had then made alliances with first one militia and then another, sometimes instigating warfare and then standing back to watch it develop, before stepping in to quench it when the moment was opportune. Assad's influence had waxed and waned as Lebanon developed into anarchy. In the main his military detachments had been disciplined and effective, as well as well-armed with modern Soviet weaponry (including combat aircraft) that was superior in quantity and calibre to any possessed by the Lebanese army or the armed militias, Israel being its only regional military superior in this respect.

Syrian military intervention had been calculated and limited, and had been called often upon as a last resort to stop intermilitia fighting, using only sufficient force to quell a particular bout of fighting.

Israel had wanted Lebanon to remain neutral in Middle Eastern affairs, but realised that, as an Arab nation – around 50 per cent of whose population were Muslims – this would not be attainable until an overall Arab–Israel peace agreement

had been reached. Accordingly Israel had maintained covert links with the Lebanese army and certain Christian militias, giving military aid and supporting the partition solution. Israel's main concern had been to rid Lebanon of Palestinians, but it had been unsuccessful in this, despite major offensive operations and acts of reprisal. Hence Israel had retained a security zone in Lebanese territory, manned by its SLA militia.

Israel had wanted the Lebanese Civil War to continue for as long as Palestinian and Hezbollah militias and their bases remained in Lebanon, and had therefore been disappointed when the Treaty of Brotherhood had been signed in Damascus allowing these two aggressors to remain adjacent to their border.

From 1982 the Iranian revolutionary government had begun to take an active interest in the Lebanese problem as Ayatollah Khomeini wanted to take the Lebanese Shias under his wing and use their territory as a stepping stone to Jerusalem, but then the war with Iraq had absorbed his attention until August 1988. Iranians had specialised in subversive warfare through means such as the formation and backing of Hezbollah, the international hostage-taking project, attacks against Israel and suicide bombing. Hezbollah had come up against both the Lebanese Shia Amal militia and the Palestinians, and the Lebanese army had been unable to constrict it. Hezbollah's presence had been feared by the Lebanese, Israeli and Syrian governments as it was using Lebanon as a proxy battleground.

After its early disastrous intervention in the Lebanese Civil War as part of the UN multinational force, the United States had concentrated on preventing the UN from instigating any action regarding Lebanon that would be contrary to Israeli interests, and had tried to exert its influence through Egypt and the Gulf oil states. The United States had also pushed aside French and Western European attempts at intervention. More credit was due to the Arab League for successful diplomatic negotiations than the Western powers, Israel and their media were prepared to admit.

Finally, military history indicates that civil wars tend to be more bitterly contested than national ones, the competing causes resulting in differing alliances and sometimes

divided families. Lebanon was no exception. One somewhat unusual characteristic was the rise of more or less autonomous armed militias and their changing alliances of convenience, which at times made it difficult to discern exactly who was fighting whom. As in most wars, arms and ammunition seemed to be in profuse supply. External sponsors fuelled the flames for their own particular reasons, while the militias and factions were not particular about who provided them with arms.

There were no outright winners to engage in triumphalism, as none had gained exactly what they had wanted from the civil war; only survivors, who chose to follow a path of peace, conditioned by pragmatism and commonsense.

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Index

Note: The following will not be shown in this Index as they appear on most of the pages: Amal; Beirut; Christian(s); Falange(ist)(s); Lebanon(ese); Muslim(s); Palestine(ian)(s); PLO.